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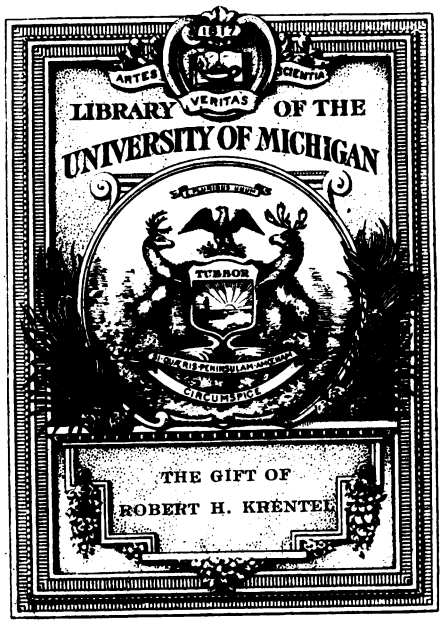

IN MEMORY OF
ISABELLE HANFORD

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DISCOURSES

ON

RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

REV. JOB SWIFT, D. D.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

SKETCHES OF HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER,

AND A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT WEST-RUTLAND, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

BY THE REV. LEMUEL HAYNES.

Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance. II. PETER, I. 15.

MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT,

PRINTED BY HUNTINGTON AND FITCH.

Nov. 1805.

Rachel H Newell
In memory of Miss Lucy A Hanford
10-30-46

DISTRICT OF VERMONT, *to wit:*

(L. S.) BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the first day of December, in the thirtieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, *Huntington & Fitch*, of Middlebury, in the said District, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following to wit:

"Discourses on Religious Subjects, by the late Rev. JOB SWIFT, D. D. To which are perfixed, Sketches of his Life and Character, and a Sermon, preached at West-Rutland, on the occasion of his death, by the Rev. LEMUEL HAYNES.

"*Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.* II. Peter, i. 15."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned."

CEPHAS SMITH, jun.
Clerk of the District of Vermont.

The above is a true copy of record.
CEPHAS SMITH, jun. *Clerk.*

PREFACE.

THE circumstances under which the present work makes its appearance, are different from those usually attending publications of this nature. To those unacquainted with these circumstances, some apology may be necessary for its appearance in its present form. The critical reader may possibly complain, that he does not find the work so complete as it ought to have been, to have authorized the publication of it. But he is requested to suspend his censure till he attends to the following brief statement

It is now about a year since the mournful tidings arrived, of the death of Dr. Swift. The news appeared deeply to affect all classes of men, and for a long time was the general topic of conversation, as at the death of a Patriarch. It was a remark frequently made, that no person could have died in the State, whose death would have been more universally and deeply felt by the virtuous part of community. Under these circumstances, the minds of people were naturally turned to a review of the life and character of the deceased.—It was much lamented that Dr. Swift, in the course of his life, had never, in a single instance, suffered any of his writings to be published. Of course, it appeared that the benefit accruing to the world, from the labors of this great and good man, was about to terminate in some degree, with his life. It also appeared, that Dr. Swift had left behind him no written documents, from which facts could be collected, which might assist in detailing the history of his life.

From such materials, however, as could be collected from different sources, some sketches were drawn up and published in the Evangelical Magazine. In the course of these enquiries, the Editor of the present work was lead to inspect the manuscripts of Dr. Swift; but found them in such a state, that they must be copied and corrected, to be read with any advantage. Dr. Swift had not been in the habit for many years, of writing out his sermons at full length: His manuscripts, therefore, were merely short minutes which he made, to assist him in digesting and recollecting his thoughts. Still they appeared too valuable to be wholly lost to the world. Numerous persons also wished for copies of them. But here lay a difficulty. Dr. Swift, as it was well known, never intended them for publication, and it seemed like doing injustice to his reputation, to publish them in their imperfect state. The following motives, at last determined the publication of them, notwithstanding the before mentioned objection.—Dr. Swift had left behind him a numerous family, who wished to be able to peruse some of the manuscripts; which were altogether useless in their present state. It was finally concluded, therefore, to publish them in the way stated in the printed proposals; the avails of the publication being added to the funds of the Evangelical Society in this State, instituted for the purpose of aiding needy and pious young men for the work of the ministry. Dr. Swift had been known to be friendly to the laudable designs of the society, to have had the good of pious young men much at heart, and could not, therefore, it was supposed, with reason, have refused that the world should, in this way, still receive benefit from his writings.

In the proposals, mention was made of Discourses and *Essays*. It was, at the time when the

proposals were published, contemplated to digest some of the manuscripts into the form of *Essays*, particularly those on the covenant and on the government of the church. But this design has been laid aside, and the manuscripts are all published in the form of Discourses.——Perhaps some may be disposed to think that a better selection might have been made than the one now offered to the public. With respect to this point, the Editor can say, merely, that he has been obliged to select those discourses which he could easily read and decypher, and that his avocations did not admit of his examining the variety of manuscripts to the extent which he could have wished. Many of the Discourses, it will be seen, are short; but perhaps this very circumstance will induce some to read them, who would not enter upon the labor of reading Discourses of usual length. Besides, a little a little variety in publications of this nature, is not disagreeable.

It is not pretended that the work will have a tendency greatly to add to the reputation of Dr. Swift, or that it will give those who have been strangers to his reputation, a just idea of his merits. Those, however, who knew him, will, by it, be assisted in recalling him to mind. His numerous friends, will, it is believed, cherish it as a precious, although imperfect memorial, of a great and good man. Dr. Swift has, through the blessing of God, been to many, a spiritual father. All such entertain for him great personal regard, and will, without doubt, peruse his writings with feelings very different from those, with which they would read the writings of a stranger. Such persons will receive the book with the same cordiality with which they received the author when living. They will not reject it, because it may lack

the studied beauties of style and composition. It was the ardent wish of his heart to promote religion in the world, as being emphatically "the one thing needful." In comparison with this, all things else were by him undervalued. His mind, like that of Paul, was swallowed up in the great object of winning souls to Christ. He did not seek great things for himself; but was willing to endure hardships and make many personal sacrifices for the good of others. In coming into this new country at so early a period, he appears to have been influenced by the most benevolent feelings, and he will long be remembered as, in a sense, the Apostle of Vermont.

His brethren in the ministry, who have ever entertained for him a peculiar respect, will consider any thing relating to him as precious. It is hoped that all, into whose hands this book may come, will experience from it quickening, edification, and comfort.——It is submitted to the public with the hope that it will be candidly received, and with earnest prayer to God, that it may please him to make it instrumental in promoting that spiritual welfare of mankind, to which the life of the esteemed Author was sincerely and ardently devoted.

Middlebury, Nov. 27, 1805.

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OF THE

Rev. JOB SWIFT, D. D.

DEATH is a subject always affording religious instruction. The death of a private person, though it furnish to all matter for useful contemplation, is apt to interest but the small number of those personally acquainted with the deceased. The death of one sustaining a public character, especially of a public benefactor to mankind, excites a more general interest and concern. Perhaps in few instances has the death of a minister of the gospel occasioned a more deep and universal sympathy than that of the Rev. Job Swift, D. D. The universal grief, manifested by all classes in community, must be considered as furnishing a sincere tribute to his worth, and an ample testimony of his extensive usefulness. All acknowledge the importance of keeping alive the memory

of such men, that, though dead, they may yet speak.

The following imperfect sketch of his life and character may not be unacceptable to those, who cherish in their hearts, the memory of those great and good men, who have done honor to the cause of christianity.

The Rev. Job Swift, D. D. was born in Sandwich, in the State of Massachusetts, on the 17th of June, A. D. 1743, O. S. While he was very young, his father removed to Kent, in Connecticut. He became a member of Yale College in 1761. His mind became impressed with a sense of religion while he was at College, and was studying the writings of President Edwards. He was graduated 1765. He was by nature endowed with those distinguished talents, which would have enabled him to appear with the highest reputation in any profession. It was from motives of duty that he chose the ministerial profession, and he was assisted in his preparatory studies by the Rev. Dr. Bellamy, of whom he ever afterwards retained a profound esteem. He was little more than twenty-two years of age, when he became a preacher of the gospel. In the following year, he was ordained over a church and people in Richmond, Mass. where he labored seven years. His prospects of usefulness in this place were, for a time, favorable and encouraged him to hope that his labors would be successful. That he might more readily lead the minds of his people into a proper understanding of the christian doctrines, he lent his aid in favor of religious conferences, in which, questions on doctrinal subjects were freely discussed. By his unwearied exertions a great part of his people, in a short time, became well indoctrinated, and some few of them the hopeful subjects of gospel

grace. But alas! The scene was soon changed. His bright prospects began to darken, and he had soon to encounter those afflictive difficulties which so often fall to the lot of the faithful ministers of Christ. His difficulties here arose solely from his strict and conscientious adherence to what he judged divine truth. Neither the purity of his sentiments nor his christian charity would suffer him to favor the sentiments and wishes of many of his church. While he was faithful in teaching them that the just live by faith, and warning them of the danger of being slothful in the performance of christian duties, many were highly offended with him, because he did not preach consolation. Having set himself as a defence of the gospel of Christ, he could not be persuaded to accommodate himself to their feelings. This served but to increase their dissatisfaction, and they at length declared themselves irreconcilable. He was of course soon dismissed from his pastoral charge. Many and grievous were the trials and afflictions which he experienced: But he endured them all with the patience, submission and cheerfulness, which formed such distinguished traits in his character thro' his whole life. After his dismission from the church in Richmond, he preached in different places about a year, during which time, nothing very remarkable happened with relation to him. He then removed to a place called the Nine-Partners, in the State of New-York. During his stay in this place, he had the misfortune of losing the chief part of his property by the depreciation of paper currency. This loss, though severe, he endured with all his usual fortitude and cheerfulness. Here his gospel labors were attended with no apparent success; and he met with no opposition; for the greatest stupidity and carelessness

reigned among his people, notwithstanding all his endeavors to awaken them. At the end of about seven years, finding his labors ineffectual, he thought it his duty to remove to some other place. He then went to Manchester, in Vermont, where he labored successfully about two years. The Lord attended the word which he preached with his spirit, and a considerable number were gathered into the church of Christ, under his administration. He then had an invitation to settle in Bennington, where he spent about sixteen years. During this term, he was called, nearly at the same time, to part with two of his children. This afflicting stroke of Providence he endured with that patience and submission which always peculiarly characterized him. It may not be expedient to go into an enquiry relative to the causes which led to his dismission from the church and people of Bennington. The event is recent and the subject a delicate one. The people of Bennington, it is hoped, while they realize their obligations to a once beloved and faithful pastor, will cherish with pleasure his memory, and be fully sensible of the honor conferred on them, in having enjoyed the labors of one so highly distinguished. The ecclesiastical council, convened for his dismisson, remark that, "they are exceedingly happy to find his moral, christian and ministerial character, entirely unimpeached, and that the church explicitly declare, that they know nothing militating against him, as an able and faithful minister: That they therefore, from their own acquaintance, from the testimony of the church and people in Bennington, and from his noted character in this and the adjacent states, do most cheerfully recommend him as an able, faithful and pious minister of the gospel, whose praise is in all the churches." After leaving

Bennington, from motives truly pious and laudable, he removed to Addison. The people of Addison will always remember, with the warmest emotions, their obligations to him for the good which he was instrumental of accomplishing among them. The town had long been in a divided state, the situation, unhappily of too many of the towns in Vermont. But after the town was blessed with his residence, the moral and religious character of the people was soon entirely changed. A church was organized and rendered respectable by the number of its members. Public worship on the Sabbath was statedly observed, and every thing began to wear a new and promising appearance. It is not easy to conceive the grief, which the people felt on learning the sorrowful news of his death. This truly mournful event happened, while he was in the northern part of Vermont on a mission, which, with the consent of his people, he voluntarily undertook at his own expense. The same zeal and disinterested concern for the highest good of his fellow creatures, which he displayed through life, he exhibited till death. On the 20th of October, 1804, after he had passed his sixtieth year, while he was at Enosburgh, his kind Lord relieved him from his christian warfare, and without doubt, received him to a more noble and exalted state, in a better world, where warfare is never known. The patience with which he endured the pains of his last sickness, and the composure and peace of mind, which he maintained in the prospect of approaching death, excited the greatest astonishment in an unbeliever who happened to be present. When asked if he was willing to die—Dr. Swift replied, "Death has no terrors." Most persons think it a happiness to

die in the midst of their friends; but he, more tender of them than of himself, wished that none of them might be present to witness so painful a spectacle. Some of his last words were—"I have often thought it would be very distressing to have my family around me in the hour of death." Thus died the Rev. Dr. Swift, cut off by a sudden death, in the entire possession of his mental faculties, and at the very height of his usefulness.

His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Benjamin Wooster, from Isaiah, lvii. 1. *The righteous are taken away from the evil to come.* His funeral rites were performed in the presence of the same persons who had heard his last sermon and witnessed the earnest zeal for their salvation, which he manifested at the conference which he was attending when taken unwell. Surely they must be greatly blame-worthy, if they have failed to profit by the affecting and instructive lesson which they then received, or if they suffer the impressions made on their minds ever to be effaced. A funeral sermon was afterwards preached at Addison, by the Rev. Jedediah Bushnell, from Heb. xi. 4. *By it being dead he yet speaketh.* The Rev. Lemuel Haynes also preached a funeral sermon on the occasion, to his people in West-Rutland.*

A few remarks will here be added, as a farther illustration of the character of the Rev. Dr. Swift.

A person, who had the best opportunity of knowing and observing him accurately, declares "that patience, contentment and cheerfulness, in every circumstance of his life, distinguished his character: That he never knew him express a murmuring or complaining word, or manifest any

* The reader will find the substance of this discourse subjoined to this account of the life of Dr. Swift.

real uneasiness in any situation, however disagreeable, or under any trial, however afflictive: That if he ever discovered any thing of the kind in any of his family, he always admonished them; reminding them how many mercies they enjoyed, and how ill they deserved them: That he always bore the contradiction of the wicked with the most admirable patience: That he never knew him, in a single instance, revile again when he was reviled; but that he always bore testimony against the wickedness of the wicked in a charitable and gospel manner. As was his doctrine, so was his life."

The character of Dr. Swift shines with distinguished lustre in whatever situation or relation he be viewed, whether as a man, as a citizen, as a christian, pastor, scholar, neighbor, friend, husband or parent. He early discovered an inquisitive turn of mind and a fondness for investigating science and truth. The Author of nature had given him a capacious and comprehensive mind, and rendered him capable of exploring the depths of knowledge and of investigating the most abstruse subjects. Divinity was his favorite study. In this science he made great acquisitions. His views were profound and clear; his sermons rich in sentiment and well digested. Such was the strength of his mind, that he never committed his sermons to memory, nor for many years, made use of notes in delivering them. The numbers who have often been entertained and edified by his faithful labors and instructive discourses, can witness that he was an able preacher, a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of God. In prayer he was solemn, devotional and fervent. He was always able to adapt himself to particular occasions with peculiar pertinency. His words were weighty and accompanied with an air of sincerity.

His manner was tender, affectionate and winning. With truth may it be said of him, that in meekness he instructed those who opposed. His religious sentiments he endeavored to found on the word of God, rather than on human creeds. He resorted to the word of God as to a pure source, that he might receive from thence unadulterated knowledge. He always inculcated strongly on his hearers, the doctrine of human depravity, the necessity of regeneration, faith, repentance and good works, and adapted his discourses to common comprehension, never over-looking even the lowest capacity. He was apt to converse with persons of every description, that he might win their good will and benefit them. He ever manifested that zeal for the great truths and duties of christianity which is according to knowledge; but, at the same time, abhorred bigotry. He ever exhibited an amiable liberality of disposition in his judgment of others, was disposed to speak of them with candor, and entertain a charitable hope for all of whatever denomination, who appeared to possess the essentials of religion. The different congregations with whom he has successively labored, can witness his prudence in the discharge of ministerial duties, his sincere love of peace and his unwearied efforts to preserve it. They can witness that he was not slothful, but abundant in labors, coveting not theirs but them.—The words of Cowper apply, with such exact propriety, to the person who is the subject of these remarks, that one is almost tempted to suppose, that the poet must have had a personal reference to him.

"A preacher, such as Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve and own.
——Simple, grave, sincere;
In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain;
And plain in manner. Decent, solemn, chaste,

And natural in gesture. Much impress'd,
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious that the flock he fed
Should feel it too. Affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men."

Providence, in casting his lot in Vermont, appears to have placed him where he could do most good, and where he was most wanted. On him literally devolved the care of all the churches. They looked up to him as to a father, for counsel and advice. His influence was never confined to the place where he lived; but was felt and most readily acknowledged in other towns and societies, where religion had any friends. There are few men in any profession, who attain to such distinguished eminence, and fewer still, to whom all concur in paying such distinguished respect. His weight among the clergy was not less than among the people. Seldom was there an ordination where he was not consulted, or an ecclesiastical council where he was not invited. At councils and meetings of the clergy, he ever presided with peculiar dignity. His age, talents and influence placed him at the head of the clergy, and by them, he was universally beloved and revered. He *felt* for the destitute situation of the newly settled towns, and more than once, at an advanced age, encountered the difficulties attending a mission. Though at times he viewed prospects as very dark with respect to the religious state of Vermont, and was ready to be discouraged;—yet he would never give up his hopes entirely; Providence rewarded his perseverance and prayers by giving him more comfortable views, during the latter part of his life, and it was with heart-felt pleasure that he beheld, before his death, a revival of religion in many of the towns.

Whether we view him, as a minister, or as a man, as laboring to promote the spiritual or the temporal happiness of others, he was truly benevolent, pious and sincere; wishing well to all, and contriving to promote their welfare. In conversation he was instructive and cheerful; and of easy access to all, both young and old. He ever was forward to countenance merit. Ingenious and pious young men he stimulated to obtain a liberal education and willingly assisted them in preparing for it.

He was remarkable for his kindness and hospitality; ever proved himself a faithful friend; was frank in his disposition; but at the same time prudently cautious. In private life he was the affectionate husband and the kind parent; and was distinguished for constancy, diligence and activity. He was an accurate observer of men and things; and though he never would depart from his proper station, yet he was not inattentive to political occurrences.

As a scholar, he was well versed in classic literature; and the honor of a Doctorate in Divinity, conferred on him by the corporation of Williams College, was but a deserved tribute to his worth. He was a friend and patron of literature and of literary institutions, and was successively member of the corporations of Dartmouth, Williams and Middlebury Colleges. In relation to all matters of business, in which he was engaged, he possessed what may be termed an *efficient character*. His sound judgment enabled him to discern real difficulties and to provide against them. His zeal to do good was undiminished to the last. His death, like his life, was calm without any surprize or agitation of spirit. He died with a blessed hope of a glorious immortality.

Let his life and example stimulate others to a happy imitation, and his death impress upon the hearts of all, the things which they have heard from his lips, that now he is dead they may have them always in remembrance.

The substance of the Rev. LEMUEL HAYNES' *Sermon delivered at Rutland, (West Parish,) Oct. 28th,* 1804. *Occasioned by the sudden and much lamented death of the late Rev.* JOB SWIFT, *D. D.*

2 TIM. IV. 6.

And the time of my departure is at hand.

AMONG the many sources of evil to men, there are few more hurtful than their inattention to future scenes: This subjects them to unavoidable troubles here, and endless sorrow hereafter. Men are generally disposed to croud eternal realities from them, and put far away the evil day. Having the last week heard of the sudden death of the Rev. Dr. Swift, which I consider, speaking after the manner of men, a greater loss to the church than could have taken place in the death of a single individual in this State; and having lately had so agreeable an interview with him, it has fixed my mind so intensely on eternal realities, that I found some difficulty in turning my attention on any other subject.

If ever the sentiment in my text was proclaimed in powerful and significant language, it is in this alarming dispensation of Divine Providence, *The time of my departure is at hand.*

St. Paul wrote this epistle after his last confinement at Rome, about nine years after the former, and a little before his death, as intimated in the text. Although the exact time of our death is fixed by the unalterable purpose of God, Job vii. 1. xiv. 5.—yet this moment to us is uncertain. We are not to suppose that Paul understood this; but by what he could discern by the conduct and temper of his enemies, he concluded that his exit was near. *Analuseoos*, which is rendered departure, signifies "to return home; to weigh or loose anchor; to change our place. It is a metaphor taken from mariners, importing the sailing from one port to another. Death is, as it were, the unfolding the net, or breaking open the prison door, by which the soul was before detained in a kind of thraldom."—*See Leigh's Critica Sacra.*—Paul expected to live in a future state, and that death was not an eternal sleep, but that a crown of glory awaited him beyond the grave. That we ought to live in the constant expectation of death, is the point to which our attention is particularly called on the present occasion.

The *nature* and *importance* of the duty will be considered.—There are many people who, though they have the clearest intimations that they must die, yet do not expect it. Every age of the world affords us painful examples of the truth of this observation. Death often comes and finds us sleeping. Many no doubt will go into eternity within one hour, that have no expectation of dying for years yet to come. Some of you who are now present will doubtless die within a few weeks, who are not looking for such an event. Many of you have more worldly schemes, already laid out, than you can accomplish to the day of your death. Follow men to their death-bed, and you will generally find that death is an unwelcome

and an unexpected messenger. Who those are that live in the expectation of death, is a question of serious importance.

People who expect to die will have their thoughts much on the subject, as one who is about to remove to a great distance, will think and converse much about the matter. Job called the grave his house, and made his bed in the darkness, and said to corruption, thou art my father, to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister. The man who considers that the time of his departure is at hand, will not be much elated with sublunary objects: Of whatever importance they may be to others; yet to him they are of little consequence, as he is just ready to leave them. 1. Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. But this I say, brethren, the time is short. "It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."—Neither prosperity nor adversity will much affect him, who expects every hour to come to the end of his journey, or close his eyes on things below.

The man who expects soon to remove, will have his mind much taken up with the country to which he is going: He will inquire about it, and form as much acquaintance with it as possible; he will attend to the geography of it, and will have it much in his conversation; will wish to know how it is like to fare with him when he arrives there. The dying man, who acts in character, will read the word of God, that informs us about eternal things, will endeavor to obtain a knowledge of the heavenly state—of its laws, inhabitants and employments. He will look upon the things that are

not seen that are eternal. 1 Cor. iv. 18. And his conversation will be in heaven. Phil. iii, 20.

A man that adopts the sentiment in my text will set immediately about the work of preparation for death, will without any delay, set his house in order. Being struck with a sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, he will summon every faculty of his soul to the most vigorous exertion in this great work; will do with his might what his hand findeth to do: He will not put off that work until to-morrow that should be attended to to-day, since he knows not what a day may bring forth. He will pay a diligent attention to the means of grace. Prayer, reading, meditation and attending religious institutions, will be matters of serious importance. When men are apprehensive that they are drawing near the eternal world, they commonly have very different views of many external duties that they despise in days of health: Visits from ministers and pious friends, prayer and religious conversation now appear valuable. The man that really expects soon to die, like Paul in the text, will be solemn, serious and honest; will not trifle with sacred things; but will act in view of a judgment to come.

Further. They who are properly looking out for death, look upon it as an event to which they are exposed at any time, at any place, or on any occasion, at home or abroad; and they will endeavor not to engage in any work inconsistent with being called immediately before the bar of Christ. A willingness to depart out of time and to land on the shores of immortality, comports with the nature of the duty under consideration. With what holy and extatic joy does the apostle in the chapter and verse from which our text is selected, anticipate the approaching moment of his departure. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time

of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." In a word; To live as expectants of death, is to do the work of every day in the day; that we faithfully discharge the duties we owe to God, to ourselves and fellow creatures: That we live in the daily exercise of christian graces, and preserve in holy obedience in a constant dependence on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. We are now to attend to the importance of the duty, or the propriety of our living in the constant expectation of death.

We argue from divine injunctions. How constantly and forcibly is the sentiment enjoined in the word of God. "*Watch therefore.* Be ye also ready. Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning," &c. Are the repeated admonitions of him who spake as never man spake. To live in the constant expectation of death is falling in with the dictates of the written word of God, and with the examples of the people of God, who attained to eminent degrees of piety. They considered themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth; that their days were as a shadow, and that the time is short. The dispensations of Divine Providence illustrate the same idea, that the time of our departure is at hand, and call for correspondent deportment. The history of mankind; the repeated instances of death within our own observation, point us to the grave, and proclaim with united voice, that "There is but a step between us and death." Men of every character, station, age, and relation in life are daily falling victims to the king of terrors, and leave us this

kind admonition, that the time of our departure is at hand.

If we were to look round on the various instruments of death, we learn the propriety of constant watchfulness. Almost every thing we behold is armed with deadly weapons, and ready to destroy: Even when we think we are fleeing from the enemy, we often run into the arms of death. The feeble and delicate state of our bodies loudly proclaims our approaching dissolution. The pains and infirmities which have already racked this earthly house of our tabernacle, show us that it cannot be long before it will crumble and fall. When I turn my eyes around on this congregation, I behold evident signatures of death in every countenance, which speak the language in the text, *The time of my departure is at hand.*

Suitably to imbibe this sentiment would have a happy influence on us in every department of life. —On ministers and people, parents and children, friends and neighbors. We should lay hold of every opportunity to admonish, reprove and instruct. Did we consider on all occasions, that it is more than possible that we are giving our last and dying advice, would it not make a great alteration as to the *manner* of our addresses? Keeping death at too great a distance tends to make us cold and indifferent about the things of religion. It is often the occasion of that foolish jesting and levity in which we are too prone to indulge.—This renders our visits among our friends so very barren, and turns our conversation on subjects of no importance.—Was it constantly sounding in our ears; *The time of my departure is at hand!* it would have a salutary influence on our conduct, and others would derive unspeakable advantage from it.—I might further add, as an incentive to the duty under consideration, That to live in the

constant expectation of death is the only way to be prepared for it, and obtain a victory over it. The reason that this enemy breaks in upon us with such terror and surprize, is because we do not watch or keep awake. When our blessed Lord calls upon us to watch, he takes the metaphor from the centinels that stand on guard or on the watch-tower. The word signifies to *keep awake*. If we view death at a great distance, and so fall asleep, should he come at such a moment, we fall an easy prey to the king of terrors. On the other hand, do we stand looking for, and hastening to the coming of the Lord, with our loins girded about and our lights burning, that when Christ shall come and knock, we may open immediately, we shall have the blessedness of those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. This no doubt supported our reverend father, whom God has lately called home; he could say amidst the agonies of dissolving nature, "Death has no terrors to me." This account I lately had from one living in the family at the time of the Doctor's death. His usual calmness and fortitude of mind shone conspicuous in his last moments, and astonished spectators. In a word, the magnitude and importance of death, judgment and eternity should command the utmost attention, watchfulness and circumspection.

The subject, thus far illustrated, suggests a number of thoughts, which if pursued by way of improvement, would afford us useful instruction.

In the first place, It is natural to observe that it is very probable that there are many people that will never be saved. They are on the very borders of the grave; they have but a few moments to live, and yet have done nothing to prepare for death, and have no disposition to do any thing. The work is great and they are fully determined to do

nothing by way of preparation. This no doubt is the case with many present.

We may further observe that there is but a little difference between men's outward circumstances; between the rich or the poor, the old and the young: Death will, in a moment or two, lay all on a level.—There is but a very little difference between the dead and the living, only a single step.

We are taught once more by a review of this subject, that all disputes about religion will soon subside. 'Tis vain for men to spend their time in warm and angry contentions about matters that will be decided in a single moment. "The time of our departure is at hand."

How ministers are to preach, and how people are to hear, and how all ought to conduct in every place and on all occasions, are easily deducible from the preceding discourse, viz: In the constant view of death and the eternal world. The sound should always be in our ears, "The time of my departure is at hand!" and should have a commanding influence on all our behavior.

We should by this subject be led to examine ourselves, and take a review of our past life; since we are soon to leave this world, and our endless happiness or misery depends on the manner in which we improve the present life. Blessed are all they who can adopt the language of the dying apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," &c.

In a particular manner, we ought to be excited to the utmost diligence in religion, since our time is so short, and since the sentiment is so powerfully inculcated by the deaths of others, with whom we yesterday conversed.

The recent instance of mortality speaks with too much energy to be disregarded. Perhaps, scarcely ever was there a death in which we were

more interested, or one in which God could have manifested equal displeasure against us. If so important and virtuous a character could not be exempted, but must be called away suddenly in the midst of his usefulness: May we not with propriety every day be looking out for death? The situation in which God in his providence, had lately placed Dr. Swift, and the remarkable success that attended his ministerial labors among the people where he resided, afforded pleasing prospects, and promised a long continuance; but in a moment our expectations are frustrated, by him who destroyeth the hope of man. The preacher has not the vanity to suppose, that a commendation from him would add much weight to a character so well established among all who were acquainted with him. I have often thought, and repeatedly mentioned in private conversation, that I thought I never saw the description of a gospel minister, as given in the word of God, so illustrated and exemplified by any person as in the life and character of Dr. Swift.

Few ever attained a more thorough acquaintance with divinity, or were so capable of opening the mysteries of the gospel. He appeared always ready to solve difficult passages in the Scripture, and questions in theology. I believe numbers in the ministry are ready to acknowledge, that many important ideas on this subject they have obtained through his instrumentality. Affability, christian zeal and firmness in the fundamental principles of religion, were distinguishing traits in his character. These things I thought shone more conspicuous in him than usual at our last meeting. His benevolence and hospitality often astonished those who came under his roof. Those who had taste for plain, instructive, experimental preaching, greatly admired his public performances.

His attachment to, and exertions in, the missionary interest were great: I have often thought to the prejudice of his health, especially of late. About the last conversation I had with him was on the subject of missions. He requested me to go to a place at some distance to preach, as he had given the people previous encouragement. I told him I was pre-engaged; he replied, "It will not do to neglect them, I must go myself."—But few churches in this State, on this side of the mountain, but owe much of their present prosperity, under God, to Dr. Swift.—Perhaps no man was more improved, and more useful in ecclesiastical councils than he. In our associations, where he always presided, he was truly a burning and a shining light. But however hard to realize the thought, he is gone!—Heaven has so decreed, and it becomes blind mortals to submit. Oh! let us be thankful to God that we have enjoyed him so long.—Let us call to mind and rightly improve the advantages with which we have been favored, and endeavor to imbibe that temper and imitate those virtues that dwelt so richly in him. Oh! that a double portion of his spirit might rest upon all the ministers of Christ: That those especially in this State, to whom he has been so kind a father and benefactor, would consider how loudly God by this Providence calls us to engagedness in his cause, knowing that the time of our departure is at hand. Let us learn to put our trust in that God, who is able to take care of his church without us, or those who are more eminent in gifts and grace, and who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. *Amen.*

DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE I.*

ACTS XX. 20.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable to you.

THIS passage is a part of the Apostle's farewell address to the church of Ephesus. He had labored at no place so much as at this, and he had, no doubt, a tender affection for the Ephesians. His ministry was now closed. He was now about to part with them, never to see them again in this world. He expresses the consolation of his heart, that he had obtained grace to be faithful and to administer whatever might be profitable. Many of the doctrines of christianity are so offensive to the pride of men, that the temptation to keep back is strong, and it is often matter of regret to many, that they have yielded to temptation in this respect. But the Apostle, amidst all his trials and

* The substance of this discourse is supposed to have been delivered at Bennington, when the Doctor took leave of that people.

in a view that he had to meet his hearers at the bar of God, had this support, that he had not yielded to temptation.

In the ensuing discourse, your attention will be called to the following truths.

1. A minister's leaving a people is often attended with trying circumstances.

2. Ministers are under great temptations to keep back that which is profitable to the souls of a people.

3. Some things that are profitable to the souls of a people ought not to be kept back.

4. When a minister is taking his farewell of a people that have been dear to him and whose case he has often borne before the throne of grace, it is a great comfort to reflect that he is, in this respect, clear of their blood.

1. A minister has often heavy trials when called to leave a people and consider that his work is done.—It was a tender parting which the Apostle had with the Ephesian church. He had, no doubt, his enemies; but he had valuable friends whom he did not expect to see again in this world. He expected soon to have a scene of great distress to go through.—So others, called to resign their charge, have a tender parting.—Often have they many bitter things to bear from enemies and opposers, and especially from false brethren.—Often to bear slander and reproach.—Often is the state of the church and people affecting; a broken and divided state.—In addition to all this, often has a minister dark worldly prospects in being turned out with a family and subjected to great evils.

2. The temptation is strong to keep back some things that are profitable.

Ministers have a great desire to have the good will of their people. They know that if they are faithful, it will make them enemies. Their doc-

trines and reproofs often sting the hearts of sinners.

Often have they dark worldly prospects. They see that they must be unfaithful, unless they are prepared to give up worldly prospects, and this too, when advanced in life. At the same time, they are sensible that if they would keep back, they might live in quiet. It is to be feared that many yield.

3. Some things that are profitable to the souls of a people ought not to be kept back. The great doctrines of religion are profitable to the souls of men; such as the being and perfections of God; the dependence of the creature on God; the depravity of human nature; the great and infinite evil of sin from its aim and tendency; the nature of God's law; its strict demand; the guilt of sin and solemn state of the sinner; the providence of God; his universal decree and government; the nature and necessity of the atonement; the character of Christ, the Saviour; the great work of regeneration and sanctification; the nature of christian grace; the way of life and salvation; free grace in the pardon of the sinner; the nature of the covenant, and the moral, christian duties. It is profitable to hold up the various commands of the law; to inculcate the observance of the Sabbath; the worship of God; attendance on ordinances and the duties of a holy life; to administer the promises and suitably to apply them; to make solemn application of the truth to sinners; to comfort and endeavor to strengthen the christian and promote his quickening: These are things profitable to the souls of men and ought not to be kept back.

4. It is matter of great comfort to a faithful minister, when called to resign his charge, to be able to say that he has faithfully discharged his

trust. It is a comfort in this respect, that whatever may have been the effect of his preaching on the church or society, he feels acquitted, and enjoys a quiet mind when he reflects, that he has been faithful to the souls of his hearers and done all that he could to promote their salvation. Especially is it comfortable, when he reflects that he is going to meet them at the bar of God. The day of judgement will be a solemn day to those that have kept back the truths that would have been profitable to the souls of men.

Improvement.—The connexion between a minister and people is solemn—It is for solemn purposes. Those who dwell on doctrines only, keep back essential truths. On the other hand, those who dwell on the duties of morality only, do equally keep back essential truths. The whole council of God is to be taught.

To conclude.—Brethren and friends—You are sensible that the relation which has, for a number of years, subsisted between us, has been dissolved. I am now about to remove to a distance from you, and this is probably the last opportunity, as to some, of our seeing each other again in this world. I can say, that though I know that in the sight of God, I have with respect to many things been unworthy and unfaithful, yet I have this support, that I am not conscious, that I have kept back any thing which I judge would have been profitable to you.

There are trying things in the separation that has taken place. Although some are gratified by the event; yet others feel the bowels of friendship yearning within them. There are some, perhaps, who, not so fully understanding the state of things, may blame me as forcing myself away. But I trust, that I understand what has been done by the society. All methods of support have

seemed to fail, and I have felt myself unable, without such support, to devote myself to the work of the ministry. Of course, my usefulness in this place seemed to be at an end. It is true I have had friends who have been ready to contribute for my support: But I judged that it would not be expedient for me to tarry under these circumstances. *(Cætera desunt.)*

DISCOURSE II.*

GAL. II. 2.

——But privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means, I should run, or had run, in vain.

THE ministry of the gospel of Christ is, perhaps, the most solemn work in which mortals ever engaged. It is a work on which the welfare of the hearer greatly depends. It is a work in which, as ambassadors for Christ and in the name of the King of Kings, we are called to treat with mortals on the most interesting subject, viz. their reconciliation to God and immortal salvation. To be unfaithful and slothful in such a trust, or be diverted by the amusements and gratifications of this life, must be high indignity to God, an abuse of the sacred trust and dangerous to immortal souls. On the other hand, there are motives to fidelity, which are most animating to faithful ministers. In this way may they be instrumental in

* Delivered to the Association at Bennington.

the glory and honor of the Redeemer; the prosperity of his precious, glorious cause; the conversion of sinners, and thereby of their eternal salvation; which will be so many gems in their crown of immortal glory.

One who is engaged, or entering on so solemn and interesting a work, may well have his mind deeply impressed with a sense of the weight and importance of it, and feel a serious concern to acquit himself in the best manner in the service of Christ. We cannot here propose to ourselves a more illustrious example in a mere creature, than that of the great Apostle Paul. The whole history of his ministry is a display of the most fervent zeal and activity in the cause of christianity. He is here giving a brief account of the matter and manner of his preaching. The subject matter of it was the glorious gospel of the Redeemer and the plain, simple truths of his redeeming grace.

Many who pretend to preach the gospel, have such a mixture of their own inventions and so many false glosses, that they render what of truth they would deliver, obscure, or mar the lustre and lessen the influence of it. Not only is it important that we preach the simple gospel; but that we do it in the best manner. Gospel truths are, doubtless, often without effect from the unsuitable manner in which they are delivered; a manner calculated to awaken the prejudices of mankind and so to stop their ears. The example of the Apostle in adapting his preaching as to manner, to the state of his hearers, is worthy of imitation. He communicated the gospel privately to them of reputation, as he well knew, that if they considered themselves, as exposed to the reproach and contempt of men of note and distinction in the nation, which public attendance on his instruction undoubtedly

would do, they would shun attention to his preaching, and so he would run in vain. He meant, it seems, to study human nature in all its different forms, and to adapt his preaching to his hearers, as being under the influence of just such prejudices as they are. The sentiment which may be gathered from these words is this, that ministers are exposed to be unsuccessful by an unsuitable manner of preaching; or, in other words, that ministers ought to take special care, lest their ministry be unsuccessful through a wrong manner of preaching. It must be allowed, that the matter of our preaching is of the highest importance.—If our sermons are not a clear exhibition of simple, gospel truth in its native dress, the best manner cannot render it useful to the hearers: But next to the subject matter of preaching, is a suitable proper manner.

I would here,

1. Point out some things as to *manner*, from which ministers are exposed to run in vain, or their ministry be without important effect.

2. Prove the doctrine that ministers ought to *take special care*, lest their preaching should be without important effect through a wrong manner.

I. I would point out some things as to *manner*, from which ministers are exposed to run in vain.

1. This is often the case when, though they may preach the truths of the gospel, it is in such smooth language and dress, that it is not understood; either because they are captivated with the flowers of eloquence and style, or because, to avoid giving disgust, they make use of expressions which do not, to an inattentive hearer, convey the ideas of gospel truth. It is evident that there are many of our popular preachers who never disturb the consciences of sinners, not even the most profligate and abandoned. Their preaching tend-

often rather to soothe and quiet the consciences of sinners than to have any important gospel effect. Sinners are naturally so insensible of the malignity and depravity of their natures, of their need of the righteousness and atonement of Christ, and the special influences of the spirit of God, that we ought to treat on these subjects in the most plain and unequivocal language.

2. It is often the case that preaching is to many without effect, as our discourses are not in a language and style suited to the solemn and important truths which we deliver. Some deliver their discourses in a low, vulgar style, and introduce low and uncouth metaphors, which excite levity or disgust in the minds of the hearers, and thus prevent the proper influence of truth.

The language of others may be florid: Their style may be easy and agreeable, but at the same time better suited to the stage, or bar, than the desk: It may not be calculated to solemnize the mind and add a weight to the solemn truths which we deliver. The language and style of many of our modern preachers appear rather calculated to hold up the speaker, and gain the attention of the audience to him, than to the solemn and soul-interesting truths of the gospel. As we would wish in preaching the gospel, not to run in vain, in preaching we ought to have our dress, deportment, language and style such as to keep ourselves out of sight: We should endeavor to hide ourselves behind our subject, that nothing may have influence but the pure doctrines of the gospel.

3. Ministers often run in vain in their preaching, or fail of success, by harsh and unguarded expressions, which tend rather to stir the passions and corruptions of the hearers and to stop their ears, than to gain attention and conviction. The ministers are to be bold advocates for the religion

of Jesus; yet they ought to avoid a haughty and imperious language, which tends to disgust rather than convince the hearer. I believe that there are some preachers who think that they are exercising christian boldness and faithfulness, while they are studying all the harshest expressions to convey their ideas on the doctrines of depravity and the divine government; expressions which are unguarded, and give the enemies of truth an advantage. They think notwithstanding, that they are suffering in the cause of truth. But they suffer rather for their imprudence than their adherence to the truth. We ought to labor never to disgust the hearer by any thing but truth. It is not material how soft the expression is, if it does but fully convey the idea and give a just coloring to truth.

4. Ministers often fail of success through ignorance of human nature. Hence they fail in timing their discourses; which often gives disgust and shuts the ears of an audience. It was the study of the great Apostle to get round the prejudices of the hearer, as appears from the example in our text. To remove every hinderance of the attention of those among whom he preached, he conformed to the lawful customs of the nations where he preached. To the Jews he became a Jew: To them without law, as without law. This was calculated to conciliate their attention. To gain attention to the great doctrines which we would preach, we should treat men with proper manners, titles and respect. This the great Apostle not only taught, but practised. With what becoming language and titles does he address Festus, Agrippa and others, though infidels.

5. The preaching of ministers is often without effect, as their discourses are not properly studi-

ed, as they are empty and barren with respect to important divine truth, or without a proper arrangement of ideas suited to prick the conscience.

Some preachers, through sloth, or to cherish in the minds of the people, an opinion of a kind of inspiration, have little more in their discourses than a loose harangue, or address to the passions of their hearers. They perhaps will make their boast, that they neglect even the choice of a subject, till entering the desk. This, in my opinion, is not at all to their honor, or any evidence of fidelity to Christ. We may be called in a sudden manner to speak to our fellow mortals, and may, in such case, trust the assistance of God in the use of means afforded: But when we have time to choose and adapt subjects suited to the state of the flock, it is criminal sloth as well as presumption, to be guilty of neglect. It is a great thing to choose proper subjects and to hold up truth to the best advantage, so as to take hold of the minds of the hearers. The great Apostle considers that close application to study is necessary, that our profiting should appear. One who undertakes to guide souls in the paths of truth ought to be well instructed himself in the great doctrines and precepts of religion. It must be a solemn thing to misguide one soul in the fundamental things of religion. There are some, who, because they may possess something of a gift of exhortation, feel competent to the work of the gospel ministry, when perhaps, they are not able thoroughly to explain and establish one fundamental doctrine in the christian system. Such must be guilty of the solemn evil of running before they are sent.

6. The preaching of many is without effect, as they do not enforce the doctrines which they preach by an answerable life. Of all men, ministers had need to be men of piety and to preach

daily, by the example of a sober, godly walk and conversation. We may, on the Sabbath, address our hearers in a solem manner, on the danger of their condition and the importance of reconciliation to God: But if we are light and trifling ourselves; if we are swallowed up in the world, thro' the week, we do not appear to be in sober earnest, or to believe what we preach. Our practice contradicts our instructions and greatly lessens the influence of what we say.

7. Another thing that prevents, at least in some degree, the influence of a minister's preaching, is ignorance of the state of the flock. The discourses may be good, but not adapted to the state of the flock. Some of our people may be exposed to fall into one error, and others into another. Some are under one trial and others another, and want light and help. It is therefore, the duty of a people to enable their minister to discharge his obligation in this respect. He ought, as he is able, to know the state of his flock, and to adapt his discourses accordingly.

8. Ministers often fail of success in their preaching, for want of proper zeal and fervor. They deliver their discourses in a cold, lifeless manner: They do not speak as if they felt what they say. Of course, the truths which they deliver are not forcibly impressed on the mind of the hearer. There is much contained in the reply of the stage player to the question proposed to him by the bishop on this subject. "How happens it," said the bishop, "that you stage players treat of fiction and yet people are attentive and deeply affected: But we preachers treat of important realities without effect?" "Because," says the stage player, you treat realities as fictions: But we treat fictions as realities."

For a preacher to address his hearers, as tho' he viewed their state truly alarming and deplorable as living without Christ: For him to press their reconciliation as though he felt their danger, and could not be denied in his expostulations, tends greatly to impress the mind of the hearer. We have need, my brethren, to go to our people under a sense of eternity; as looking into eternity and as fixing our eyes directly on the immortal interest of our hearers. For this end, it might be of use to pray much over our sermons and to have our studies places of sure resort to God for strength in our labour and success in our preaching.

II. Ministers have need to take special care lest, through a wrong manner of preaching, they fail of success. We have already considered that souls may perish, not only because ministers do not clearly preach the truth, but because they do not preach it in a proper manner. I would now proceed to urge the great importance of preaching in such a manner, as to afford a prospect of success in winning souls to Christ;

1. From this consideration, that the salvation of a sinner is of great importance. It is more important than to win a kingdom or world. It is a dreadful thing to perish; to be separated from God, in a state of despair of all good, to endure the effects of God's anger for one day. But how inconceivably dreadful for an eternity that will never end!

On the other hand, how great a thing to be made an heir of glory; to have communion and fruition of God for one day or week! Sensual enjoyments in the comparison vanish. How inconceivable the joys of eternal life!!

As God sees fit to honor his ministers as instruments of salvation, how strong the motives to fidelity; to be devoted to study, and exertions to

be successful! These motives, properly felt, made the Apostles of Christ willing to suffer the loss of all things and to endure contempt, reproaches, imprisonment and even death.

2. A faithful discharge of the ministerial work and success in it will be greatly to the honor of the Redeemer and the promotion of his cause. This consideration, felt in its weight and importance, must be exceedingly animating. There is nothing for which the christian so much longs as the glory of God and the increase and prosperity of the kingdom of the Redeemer. The consideration that God will be glorified by a faithful, gospel ministry, will as it ought, be very animating to a faithful minister.

3. We can scarcely think of any part which we can act that is more solemnly dreadful, than to be unfaithful and slothful as ministers; to be more captivated with public applause and esteem, or an interest in this world, than the great object of our ministry; and to soothe and flatter rather than faithfully deliver the galling and soul-humbling truths of the gospel; which are of great importance to sinners and the honor of the Redeemer. Surely they are dear bought honors and interest which are obtained at the expence of our fidelity to Christ and the sacred trust with which our success and usefulness are so nearly connected.

4. Let me urge that the ministers of Christ, or those who act as such, have to meet their hearers at the solemn tribunal of their judge; where all their sermons will be examined before the assembled universe. Not only the matter but the manner of our preaching will all come into view. As ministers therefore, we are called to act in a very solemn affair. Our conduct as such, will have great influence through eternity. If we are faithful, the happy consequences will be very conspic-

uous and extensive: But on the other hand, it will be a very solemn thing to appear there with the blood of souls in our skirts.

5. There are important rewards to the faithful and successful. The souls converted by the instrumentality of ministers' preaching, will be so many gems in their crown of glory. It will be exceedingly consolatory here, to have such important pledges of our ministry; to have a number of dear spiritual children, as the reward of our labors: A greater reward than crowns and sceptres. How much more so still, to have the promise verified, "*they that* turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." This ought to animate us to get at the consciences of sinners, and to preach under a sense of the importance of their reconciliation to God and final salvation.

These observations will naturally suggest important reflections. We see that the work of a gospel ministry is a great work. Much depends on the wise and faithful discharge of it. We see the great wisdom and propriety of our Saviour's exhortation, "be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." We need to be much devoted to it.

It is not only a great work, but a good work. It is more desirable to be thus a wise and faithful minister, than a monarch of the world. It is, at the same time, exceedingly dreadful to be an unfaithful minister.—It is on the other hand, a blessed employment to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, connected with the highest honors and rewards. The crown of glory which such will receive, will be peculiar in lustre. I do not mean that they are to expect any thing great in this world. They may expect contempt from many, but God will honor them in glory. We see that ministers need to be much in prayer and watchfulness; to study and devote themselves to the work.

I shall add but a few words more addressed to you, my dear brethren of the gospel ministry.

The subject, however imperfectly treated, may suggest some solemn reflections on the highly interesting nature of our business and employment as ministers. It may be well to take a view of our past ministry and enquire how far we may expect the blessed sentence of approbation, well done good and faithful servants? Whether we have been bold in the cause? Whether we have used all requisite wisdom and prudence in the manner of our preaching. We have some of us been called to various trials, and it will be happy if our sufferings are endured for our Lord and Master. Some are called to endure worldly straits, as the fruit of the neglect of those for whom they prayerfully and solicitously labor. Some have met with indignity and opposition from sinners, and have been rejected by those whose salvation has lain with great weight on their minds, and for whose good they have labored with tears: All which things have in them peculiar trials. Let us see to it that we are not suffering for our imprudent conduct, and have thereby stopped many ears and rendered our ministry unsuccessful.

In a worldly view, there are to all many discouragements. It is a time in which error prevails. It is a time of great stupidity and of dark worldly prospects: But, cost what it may, let us preserve fidelity to our Lord and Master. You may be courted, on the one hand, to keep back the truth, and threatened on the other. But oh! it is infinitely too great a sacrifice to gain the honors and riches of this world, at the expense of fidelity to Christ. We are not, my brethren, to expect much from this world. This, however comfortable, would be but a poor reward. If we are faithful, we shall have an infinitely more important reward.

A crown of glory awaits us from our Lord and Master, which may we by our faithful labors inherit for the Redeemer's sake. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE III.*

ISAIAH XLIX. 23.

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.

WE are now, for the first time since the settlement of peace, met to exercise our right of choice and liberty as a free people. We are now called, as a State, to attend to rules and principles of government, on which the future peace, prosperity and happiness of this State will greatly depend. Our civil rulers have now an opportunity on the one hand, to establish a system of government subordinated to the great design of its institution, to lay a lasting foundation for the political happiness of a free people, and to subserve the purposes and designs of Christ's kingdom: Or, on the other hand, to establish false and corrupt principles of government, subversive of its original design and institution, and favorable to the designs of the grand enemy of mankind. These last, like plants not of God's planting, will be rooted out and destroyed; and a state so established will be like the kingdoms described by Daniel, that will crumble and vanish

* Preached before the General Assembly at Manchester.

before the rising kingdom of Christ, as the dust of the summer threshing floor.

The All-wise Governor and King of Kings has instituted civil government for certain important purposes, which ought to be kept in view as the grand object and design of it. The Bible does not afford laws and rules adapted to particular circumstances, but exhibits only the grand leading object and outlines of civil government. Within these limits, societies and states have a right to adopt what laws and rules they please. The design of the ensuing discourse is only to hint at the tendency and design of civil government according to its institution, and to bring into view the grand ends at which civil rulers are ultimately to aim. The Apostle speaks of power, as being on the side of virtue and religion, "a terror to evil-doers and a praise and encouragement to them that do well. Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same." The Apostle is here describing power or authority vested in rulers agreeable to the will of God. When he observes that "the powers that be are ordained of God," it is not to be supposed, that he considered the government that then was, as wholly agreeable to the divine institution, but, so far as it was a terror to evil-doers, it was such. The words of the text are prophetically descriptive of the nature and tendency of civil government in its most perfect state. The prophecy of which the text is a part, was delivered while the Jews, the visible church of God, were oppressed, and in bondage at Babylon, and so had immediate respect to one of the means of their deliverance from Babylon. It had, therefore, a literal accomplishment in the protection and succour which the then church experienced against its enemies, and pointed to the decree of Cyrus and

Darius in favor of the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding of the temple, and that interposition by which they were secured, from time to time, against the rage of their enemies. "Their queens thy nursing mothers" no doubt literally referred to Queen Esther, who was an instrument of nourishing and preserving the church from the rage of its enemies: And not only did kings protect the church from the rage of enemies, as in Ezra vi. 6, 7. but actually assisted. But it is evident that these prophecies pointed to the events, only as typical of the future deliverance of the church from the antichristian reign and tyranny. Thus we find the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and the temple being left to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, applied, in the Rev. as typical of the reign of Antichrist. The fall of Antichrist's kingdom is represented by the fall of Babylon. The river Euphrates, which ran through the city, was dried up, and this prepared the way for the Persian king to enter Babylon. This event is, in the Revelations, applied to represent the future deliverance of the church. "The great river Euphrates shall be dried up that the way of the kings of the East may be prepared." So that it is beyond a doubt that the prophecy in our text, had a farther reference than to the favorable disposition and succour of the potentates towards the church of the Jews.

The words thus considered, afford this observation: The future prosperity of Christ's church and kingdom, and the spread of religion, will be accompanied with a refinement of civil government, in subserviency to Christ's kingdom. Civil government has hitherto, generally, been on the side of Satan's interest, and opposed to the kingdom of Christ. His church rose in opposition to the Roman Empire, and in almost every age,

has been greatly oppressed by the civil power; but the time is coming when the scene will be changed.

Here then it may be enquired, what are the ways in which civil government may, and will subserve the designs of Christ's kingdom?

1. Negatively, not by being immediately concerned in the government of Christ's kingdom. This is a distinct kingdom, to be governed by its own laws. Civil government has done infinite mischief, by attempting to extend its laws and influence to the church of God. Such attempts tend to jostle it from its own foundation. They have introduced numberless corruptions, oppressions, and persecutions. Christ's kingdom was not to be thus left to civil rulers, and it is robbing Christ of his prerogative to attempt to extend civil power to the Christian church. Civil government, though in its very institution, designed ultimately for the benefit of Christ's church; yet is not immediately concerned with religion or the kingdom of Christ: But has for its immediate object, the welfare of civil society. At the same time, it must be admitted that good civil government, and the government of Christ's church are so far from interfering, that they are of mutual advantage.

2. Nor has civil government a right to bind the conscience. Liberty of conscience, where conscience can be supposed to be concerned, ought, without doubt, to be enjoyed. We must all answer for ourselves, at the tribunal of our judge, and ought not to be restrained by the civil power from pursuing what we esteem the dictates of religion. I conceive therefore, that the establishment of religion by civil authority, as in Europe, is a stretch of prerogative. It does not belong to the civil power to prescribe forms of worship, creeds and confessions. Whatever aid and sup-

port civil government may lend; yet the church must be governed by its own laws, and stand on its own foundation.

But I proceed to show positively,

1. That good civil government is of great advantage to Christ's kingdom, as it is adapted to civilize man, and thereby gives the gospel an advantage. Although the power of God is the only ground of hope in regard to any; yet God usually works by rational means: And we find, that the gospel has never had much success among barbarous and uncivilized nations. It was in Greece and Rome, where the human mind had, before the coming of Christ, been greatly improved, and government carried to great perfection, that the gospel met with the most abundant success. Whereas, in the barbarous parts of Africa, the gospel never had much success.—I repeat it therefore; Though it is wholly of God to save, yet God works ordinarily by rational means. It is said that the Bereans were noble, or possessed a greater share of candor, than those of Thessalonica, which led them to search the scriptures, and therefore, it is said, many of them believed. Acts xvii. 11, 12. Civilization tends to remove that superstition and contraction of mind which are a bar to attention.

2. Civil government will be improved as an advantage to the designs of Christ's kingdom, as it is adapted to regulate the morals of men, and give a check to their licentiousness. It is the duty of civil rulers to be a terror to evil-doers, and a praise and encouragement to them that do well. There are many vices which are destructive to civil society, such as fraud, injustice, intemperance, and prophaneness.—Taking the name of God in vain, and contempt of the sacred institutions, tend to destroy the validity of civil tests and to promote

general licentiousness of manners. Indeed, good civil government tends to regulate men's morals agreeable to the dictates of revelation. In this respect, the laws and principles of Christ's kingdom and good civil government are of great mutual advantage. The instructions of the gospel tend to influence men's morals, and the restraint of laws to give the gospel an advantage. Their united force is peculiarly necessary in order to bear down vice in this licentious age, and in a State, where many, for a long time, lived in a great measure without the restraints of government. Greater exertions are now, therefore, rendered expedient. It is important that rulers set good examples; that those who are appointed to make and execute laws, should themselves observe them. If those who fill the legislative and executive departments of government, are themselves profane, immoral and intemperate, their laws and measures for suppressing vice, will have but little efficacy. There are laws against the violation of the Sabbath, and against many other hurtful vices, but they are but little regarded. And may not this be one reason of it, that all in places of public trust, do not themselves carefully observe them? If our civil fathers, who are appointed to make laws, disregard them themselves, we may well think that they are not in earnest in the matter. It is of importance, that those who rule men, should be just, ruling in the fear of God. It is especially important that their motives and conduct should be just. —As good civil government tends to check and restrain the licentiousness of men, and regulate their morals, so the church of God derives from this source, incalculable advantage. The All-wise Governor of the world has seen fit, by numberless means, in addition to the gospel plan, to lay a va-

riety of checks on the licentiousness and wickedness of men, and among these, civil government is one of highest importance.

3. Good civil government will be rendered subservient to the cause of God, as it will tend to encourage the improvement of the human mind, and especially, the instruction of children and youth. Without some degree of improvement of the human mind, all attempts to civilize will be but of little avail. Men, without the enlargement of rational improvement, will be barbarous and rough in their manners. Indeed, ignorance exposes to political and ecclesiastical tyranny.—Many, it is true, who have had a good education, make a very ill improvement of it, which circumstance prejudices the minds of many against education: But it is to be remembered, that the greatest blessings are often misimproved.

That rational improvement which good civil government will encourage, is, in various points of light, of religious advantage. The gospel itself is of advantage, only as men can read it, or receive religious instruction about it. There seems but little encouragement to attempt gospel instruction, while men are ignorant of the first principles of knowedge. Rational improvement is necessary to render men useful in promoting the designs of the kingdom of God.

4. Good civil government will subserve the designs of Christ's kingdom, as it will encourage industry and economy. Indolence and sloth are of unhappy tendency in a State.

Where industry and economy are neglected, a State cannot flourish; but will be beset with many vices, hurtful both in a political and religious view. Where there is idleness, there is commonly tavern-haunting, gaming, profane swearing, and a general corruption of manners, which tend

to stupify the minds of men, and are unfavorable to the designs of the gospel.

5. Under a good civil government, rulers will be nursing fathers to the church, and will extend to it their friendship and support.

The kingdom of Christ is a distinct kingdom, and to be governed by its own laws: But still, there is no inconsistency in saying that civil rulers, as they derive from the principles and institutions of the gospel, singular political benefit, may extend to it their care, succour and support, where it does not interfere with the dictates of conscience. The Scripture is abundant in predicting a future change in this respect, which shall be favorable to the church of God. The prophet Isaiah declares, that the time is coming, when rulers shall be friends to Christ and his cause. They are said to come to the brightness of the rising of the church. See Isaiah lx. 3. and to minister to the church of God. See verse 10, and "kings shall minister unto thee." She is said to suck the breasts of kings. See verse 15. And in the 17th verse, God promises, "I will make thy officers peace and thine exactors righteousness."

However the matter may appear in other respects, this is promised as a great blessing, that the church is to enjoy the friendship, succour and aid of civil government; that the arm that has oppressed the people of God, shall lift them up; that the kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High God: That holiness to the Lord shall be inscribed on all things, and God shall improve all his works and institutions for their original purpose and design. And may we not be allowed to indulge some pleasing prospects in regard to these great events, from some late glorious revivals of religion in different parts

of the land: A consideration that may well animate christian ministers and rulers.

Improvement.

1. Civil government has been greatly perverted from its original design and institution. Men in places of public trust, have been more solicitous to gratify their ambitious views, than faithfully to discharge their important trust in serving God and their generation. They have too commonly employed their power on the side of Satan, and against the cause of Christ. The grand object of trust has been too much kept out of view.

2. If we have had a just exhibition of the subject, every appearance of the prosperity of Zion is very animating, both in a religious and civil view.

Civil government, when aiding religion, will be one of the greatest blessings of a temporal nature; and vice and weakness will hide their heads. Civil government, thus conducted, will sweeten society; it will be accompanied with industry and temperance, which will ensure a competence of temporal good. Peace and unanimity will harmonize our public councils: Wars and tumults come to an end, and Christ gloriously extend to us his reign and kingdom.—And who knows but that Christ is now over-turning and preparing things for such a glorious day? It is a happy omen, that revivals of religion have been frequent of late. All who wish well to church or state, have abundant motives to pray for the coming and kingdom of Christ. There are, in view of the important designs of government, as explained, motives to endeavor, where there is an opportunity, by a faithful discharge of duty, to render essential service to Christ, and promote a cause which every friend of Zion has near his heart. I shall close with a brief address to the Honorable Gentlemen, whom we consider

as the guardians of our liberties, and in whom we have placed the highest confidence and trust.

In the first place, I would beg the freedom of a few words of address to His Excellency, our Governor, Deputy-Governor, and the Honorable Gentlemen who compose the Council.

Honored Sirs,

You have long been exercised in the dangers and burthens of a bloody and destroying war. I may now congratulate you on the return of peace and the establishment of our Independence. Relieved of your burthens, you are indulged with greater leisure to attend to the true principles and design of civil government. You are called to the helm in a licentious age, and in the infancy of government in this State. You are called to extend government to those who have lived under different forms, and have entertained very different sentiments on the subject. Of course, you cannot expect to avoid the censure of many of your constituents. You are called to take the helm, when many vices, pernicious to civil society, are predominant, and the public interest requires the most wise and vigorous exertions. The task which devolves on you, I am sensible, is arduous. But you are called to the helm of government, at a time, in which you have an opportunity to render essential service to God and your country. You will keep in view, the grand end of your trust, which is, to be a terror to evil-doers, to bear down vice, to endeavor to banish fraud, indolence, intemperance and the contempt of sacred institutions, remembering that the time is coming, and we hope, not far distant, when the Almighty will bring down every high look that exalteth itself against the knowledge of himself, however dignified in station. You are but the servants of Christ, and therefore, are to consider that you are to act

with ultimate reference to his kingdom. Some would suppose, that as Christ's kingdom is distinct, civil rulers have nothing to do in suppressing immorality, and especially, the profanation of the Sabbath: But it is their business to discountenance vice in general. In order to do this, so far as you are called to appoint men to office, you will see to it, that you can answer your trust to God, in appointing men who are enemies to vice. To set up men to suppress vice, who are themselves vicious, is, I will use the freedom to say, an unfaithful desertion of trust. Many of the laws of the State which relate to the suppression of vice, are trampled under foot. It is high time that some vigorous efforts were made against prevailing iniquity. Let it be remembered, that righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people. Let it be your care, so far as you are entrusted with power, to ward off the curse from this people. May the Father of Lights assist and direct you. May you have the great satisfaction of seeing your endeavors owned and blessed; and after having long served God and your generation, may you have the peaceful reflection in death, that you are about to resign a life, long devoted to the service of God and your country, and be conveyed by angels to the regions of peace and felicity above.

I shall next address myself to the House of Representatives.

Honored Gentlemen,

We have reposed in you the highest confidence and trust, as the representatives of a free people. You are called, at an early and most important period, to act in a legislative capacity. You have heard something on the subject of the ultimate end of civil government, that you are to rule in subordination to the kingdom of Christ, and to render

yourselves a terror to evil-doers, a praise and encouragement to them that do well. Your diligent attention and vigorous exertions are loudly called for, at such a day as this; a day of general corruption of manners and prevalence of vice: And in order to this, your own examples will have vast influence, both in your private and public capacity. As you would expect your laws should be revered, you are, by your own practices, to treat them as of importance. As you would bear down injustice and fraud, let your laws be founded in perfect equity. If you should make laws, which in their influence and operation, should do injustice, and deprive the citizen of his right, it might seem like encouraging fraud, and patronizing iniquity.—May the Father of Lights direct your measures, and enable you to establish laws and rules of government in consistency with the rights of a free people, and with the dictates of God's word. May you be nursing fathers to the Redeemer's kingdom. May you live to enjoy the satisfaction that you have rendered eminent service to God and his kingdom, and the State which you are called to govern: And in some late period, yet distant, come to the grave with the peaceful reflection, that you have faithfully discharged your important trust, filled up a life of usefulness to mankind, and at last, receive the approbation of your Judge, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

I shall close with a word to the congregation in general.

Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

The trust which we have assigned to our civil fathers is arduous. Many measures often appear unwise, merely through ignorance and inattention. Freedom of censuring men in public life, is a vice

complained of and condemned by the word of God. We need to take heed, lest we come under the censure of those, mentioned by the Apostle Jude, who despise dominion, speak evil of dignities and of the things which they know not. We are under solemn obligations to God and our rulers, to submit to that authority with which we have invested them, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake. Be subject to the higher powers. He that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation. The business of civil government is of vast importance. Our happiness, as a State, greatly depends on a thorough, faithful exertise of it. In this way, eminent service may be rendered to the church of God. Let us then endeavor to strengthen the hands of our rulers, and, agreeably to the exhortation, pray for all in authority, and for the farther revival and spread of religion, till kings and rulers shall actually become nursing fathers.

DISCOURSE IV.

JAMES IV. 3.

Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.

THE exercise of prayer is essential to the christian life and enjoyments, and is the very vital part of religion. The chapter containing the text seems to be particularly addressed by James to the Jews, in a view of the trials which were com-

ing on them and which ended in their destruction: He tells them the source of their trials, viz. their lusts and unbridled appetites and passions that war in their members. He assigns various reasons for these trials, as that they were not humbled and were oppressive to the poor. Thus the reason why they were not heard for relief was, that they asked amiss. They wanted divine blessings for wrong ends. The words suppose that if they did ask aright, they would receive: Otherwise their asking amiss could not be the reason why they did not receive.

I shall,

I. Point out some ways in which creatures that pretend to ask, do ask amiss.

II. Enquire what it is to ask aright.

III. Show that God does graciously answer prayers that are put up in a right and proper manner.

IV. Urge the prayer of faith in general.

1. I shall point out some ways in which creatures ask amiss.

Creatures ask amiss, when they pretend to ask for that which they do not want. Creatures for form sake, in words put up many petitions which are not dictated by desire; as for grace, pardon, a holy temper, that God's will might be done and his kingdom advanced, that God would forgive their enemies, and tell God that they ask for Christ's sake. This is drawing nigh merely with the mouth and honoring with the lips. Every petition ought to be dictated by suitable desire.

Creatures ask amiss, when in consequence of having their minds crowded with the world, they hurry over the duty, and are not delightfully exercised in it; Or have their minds ruffled with passions and occupied with an unsuitable attach-

ment to worldly, sensual objects. God will not answer such prayers, where the heart is not engaged in the duty.

We ask amiss when there is no faith or reliance on God's mercy to hear. The Apostle says, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek him. Many perform their devotional exercises without any apparent expectation of an answer. They do not appear to set their hearts on the duty. It is only a kind of daily task in which they ease their minds, as having rendered something to God: But do in fact exercise no reliance and faith.

Persons ask amiss, when they do not feel dependence on God: That he is the fountain; that all flows from him: That if they have any thing, it must come from God; and that all labor is in vain without him.

People manifest that they do not feel dependence, when they cannot get time from their worldly business to attend seasons of prayer. Their dependence is evidently on their own strength and exertions.

Persons ask amiss, when they ask for things not with a view to the glory of God, but to consume them on their lust. Mankind greatly want sometimes worldly wealth, or peace, or some temporal favors, and may seem to ask with a kind of engagedness; but they want these things for self-gratification. People sometimes when they are threatened with famine, or the desolations of war, will be disposed to attend a season of prayer: But when their own ends are answered, they are indisposed. This shows that their views are selfish.

Persons ask amiss, when their dependence is not on the righteousness and atonement of Christ; God will not hear in any other name. Creatures

think to be heard, as a reward to their prayers and doings: But there is no other name but the name of Christ, through which we can have access to God for any favor.

Creatures ask amiss, if there is not proper submission to the will and glory of God. We may ask God to heal our disorders, or spare a child, or friend, or give wealth. But if our desires for these things are absolute and unconditional, they are highly provoking to God. We should think it very unsuitable that a child or servant should come to us in this manner.

We ask amiss, when we ask for things not agreeable to the will of God. There are many things which God has manifested not to be agreeable to his will. We ought not to ask him to forgive sin but to the penitent believer. Indeed, the desires of creatures after the world are unreasonable. It is wrong to desire for our portion, a worldly treasure, or to beg absolutely of God, that he would prosper us in this or that worldly enterprize.

I proceed to show,

2. How we are to pray, so as to receive. This must be in a manner opposite to asking amiss. This duty ought ever to be performed under feelings of dependence. It is the essence, as it were, of prayer to have the soul breathe out toward God, as the great fountain of being and blessedness.

We ought to have our desires on suitable objects. If we pray under the influence of the Divine Spirit, our minds will be fixed on spiritual objects. We shall not have an inordinate thirst after the world.

To pray aright, is to have a confidence in God's fulness and mercy: It is to have a sense that he is a rewarder of those who seek him.

Prayer is a fervent aspiration of the soul after God, his glory, his kingdom, his favor and the light of his countenance.

The soul feels naked of itself, but has boldness and confidence through Christ. There is access only in his name, and no right to come in any other.—In proper prayer, there is a spirit of submission to the Divine will. Christians will not wish for any thing, if it is not consistent with the will and glory of God. All their desires are with an ultimate view to God's glory. The blessings for which, in proper exercises of prayer, they supplicate, they do not want for carnal ends.—The essence of prayer is the humble, submissive, believing desires and breathings of soul to God. Religion is, in a sense, a constant prayer: But then there are particular occasions, when this duty more immediately demands attention. Every creature has private concerns and wants. Secret prayer is enforced in various ways. So, also, a family have common wants and receive common favors.—Some are ready to question the obligation to social, family prayer. It is true the Bible does not say often, that we shall pray in secret, or point out all the circumstances and occasions of social prayer: But those who do not in a social manner, call on God in their families, and ask God for those common favors which they need, give no evidence of a sense of their need of God's mercy.—So, as a christian society, persons have a common cause and interest, and therefore, to attend on frequent seasons of social prayer is a plain dictate of religion. I greatly mistake the nature and influence of religion, if it does not lead us to LOVE to pray.

I proceed to show,

3. That God does, in a gracious manner, answer prayer which is put up, in a right and proper

way.—Here I shall consider (I.) how he answers such prayers, and (II.) prove that he does.

1. I shall consider how God answers such prayers.

God does not always answer our prayers in the bestowment of the thing conditionally asked for. A spirit of prayer is not a spirit of revelation, informing us what is best. So that it would often be a great evil, if God should grant the very thing we ask for. It would, in fact, be inconsistent with answering; since we pray for things, only, as consistent with the will and glory of God and our good. If we feel right, we can pray that God would not give us riches and honors, or even the life of our children, or other friends, unless it should be for his glory and our good. God may answer, in bestowing what is best, without giving us the very thing for which we asked. Should it be asked, how God answers prayer, and yet does not grant the very thing requested; as for instance, deliverance in trouble? God may answer in giving the soul peace and patience so as to bear the evil, and choose that the will of God might be done. God often manifests to the soul, that he does hear and accept. Thus the Apostle prayed thrice that the thorn in his flesh might be removed. He had for answer, my grace is sufficient for thee. He says therefore, that he would glory in infirmity. In like manner, may we, when God may apply a promise, glory in our trials.—I say God may grant a spirit of prayer, and answer in a different way; but it is, I believe, generally the case, that when God grants a special spirit of prayer for the recovery of any person, or special enlargement, it is with a view to answer. There have been remarkable instances, so that the minds of God's people have been satisfied. Thus it has

been the case, that God has greatly enlarged christians to pray for recovery, so as to have no doubt on their minds. Doubtless many of you, my brethren, have had the freedom that gave great encouragement. God does sometimes enlarge for the out-pouring of the spirit, so that those engaged in the duty, have been carried beyond a doubt. Indeed I do not think, that ever God enlarges his people to pray for the up-building of his church, where their prayers are not heard. God may grant the very thing prayed for, and yet not immediately. Thus the cry of the martyrs that their blood might be avenged, was, as appears from the sacred history, answered hundreds of years afterwards. So all the prayers of the devout for the coming and kindom of Christ in its millenial state, will be answered. God often grants some pledge. I do not recollect an instance of special enlargement in the church, for the conversion of sinners, where there has not been some token for good.

I proceed,

2. To prove that God does in fact answer. We should naturally be led to conclude, that this would be the case, as God has abundantly commanded the duty, and there is not a command in all the Bible, perhaps, which has not directly, or indirectly, a promise. The promises are many. "Ask and ye shall receive: Seek and ye shall find; Knock and it shall be opened unto you: Whatsoever ye ask the father in my name that will I do." —We have also striking examples of the efficacy of prayer in Abraham, Elias, and many others.

I proceed,

4. To enforce the duty of prayer in general. Prayer is a most rational and natural duty. It is the expression of dependence on God. It is the devout flow of a gospel spirit. The temper held up in the gospel, cannot exist without prayer.

All blessings come from God: Shall we not then acknowledge the hand that bestows. The duty is abundantly enforced by command, by the example of the Redeemer and of the Godly. We are strongly bound to perform the duty, if nothing more be considered than the privileges attending it. I would also urge the dreadful nature of the punishment which will attend the neglect of it. To live in the habitual neglect of this duty, is to be guilty of a practical denial of Christ, and to pour contempt on the blood of the Son of God. Indeed, it is nothing less than practical atheism.

In the review of our subject, we see how just God will be in the punishment of sinners, when he offers them life if they will ask, and yet they will not. In what dreadful light will the prayerless conduct of sinners appear!

The prevalence, or neglect of prayer is a proper index to show the state of religion, and it appears, in this view, very melancholy. How many prayerless families are there among us! How fast is the very form of religion declining! It looks as though some great wrath was kindling, and some heavy judgments preparing. Let me then press this duty, as the way of access to God. There is no forgiveness in any other way. God will be sought unto for pardoning mercy, but it is only in the way of free access in Christ. This privilege was purchased at an infinite price, and here is an open door. There is no prohibition to any, but the command is to all. If you want grace, if you want the Holy Spirit, if you want pardon and salvation through Christ, there is the highest propriety, that you should put up these desires. Make no delay then in performing this reasonable duty. Seek and you shall find. Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

DISCOURSE V.

LUKE IX. 23.

And he said unto them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

THOSE passages of scripture are peculiarly important, which point out and define the qualifications which are essential to salvation. The duty enjoined, in the text, of denying self, taking up the cross and following Christ, is indispensibly requisite in one who professes christianity.—Our Saviour had a full view of the scene of persecution and trial which was coming on his people, and which, he saw, would be to them a very strong temptation. He says many things to arm and fortify them: He tells them that if they should be ashamed of him and his words, that he would be ashamed of, and disown them in the day of judgment: That if they should, at the expense of the honor of his cause, seek to save natural life, they should lose it; With tender expostulation he enquires, of what value would this world, with all its honors, be to any one, when gained at the expence of his soul? On the other hand he declares, that if they should suffer death in adherence to his cause, it would secure an endless life. It appears from the connexion of our text, that a compliance with the duties enjoined in it, is, as it were, the hinge on which salvation turns. If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily: that is, if any one would come after me, as belonging to me, he must do it in a life of self-denial: without this, he cannot attain to salvation.

I would,

I. Explain the duty in the text, of denying self, taking up the cross and following Christ.

II. The great and absolute importance of this duty.

1. I would explain the duty in the text of denying self, (2.) taking up the cross, and (3.) following Christ. To deny self, as here required, supposes supreme love to the cause of God, his glory and kingdom. Whatever a man may do in foregoing temporal interests, to gratify self in some other way, there is no true self-denial. Some perform what they call great acts of mortification, to gratify self in another view. There are many, among the Roman Catholics especially, who will undertake pilgrimages, and perform what they call penance, in order to obtain future happiness. Some, like hermits, have secluded themselves wholly from the world. All this has been done to promote future happiness, without any regard to the cause and interest of Christ.

The more we surmount fleshly inclinations, and the weaker they are made, the greater is the self-denial. Some have supposed that the stronger the lust, the greater the self-denial: But I consider the more we obtain the ascendency over lusts and corruptions, the more self-denial is there, and the more are we under the influence of benevolence.

Self-denial respects all fleshly lusts and selfish propensities. It is in the neglect of this duty, that men have a disposition to gratify an appetite for food, or drink, to the dishonor of God and their own hurt. It is thus that men indulge in unsuitable mirth, and from a thirst for worldly honors, popularity and esteem, greatly conform to the ways of the world. They are afraid to appear in the belief of those doctrines and in that holy life

and practice which give disgust to sinners. Under the influence of this feeling, they often have a propensity, in company where serious conversation is disused, and reproof for profaneness thought uncivil, to hold their peace. Under the influence of this, many neglect to rebuke an offending brother. So, also, many neglect religious duties, in order to pursue the world. It is often the case, when creatures get into the world, that they may reflect, that they may gain several shillings in the time they would be attending religious worship, and so absent themselves from the house of God. So, also, under the influence of this, acts of charity are neglected. But the self-denial which Christ enjoins on us, is a hearty mortification and denial of ourselves in all these respects.

2. I would show what it is to take up the cross. The cross, in a literal sense, intended the wood on which executions of an ignominious kind were performed. As executions of this nature were frequent, the word, cross, came to be used to express any kind of sufferings, especially, ignominious sufferings. To make the suffering more ignominious, those that were to be crucified were compelled to bear their cross. In a religious sense, to take up the cross is to submit to all the reproach and contempt, which may be thrown in our way. Thus as advocates for the truth, we may be liable to have our names cast out, as evil. We are not to deviate in the least, from what we think to be our duty, whatever reproach and suffering may be in the way. So, as to the practice of serious piety, we are not to neglect to speak, and act for God, because there is a cross. And to take it up, is to submit to all the consequences of an open, godly life. We are not to go out of the way to find a cross, nor to shun it when in our way.

So, as to reproof of sinners, we are not to neglect this duty, where we have a call to discharge it, though we know, that it would even cost us our life.—So, with respect to exercising the duty of faithfulness to brethren, many as to various matters, shun the cross. Many are afraid to exercise civil privileges for fear of the wrath of man. Some will spend frequent visits, and say not a word about religion, lest it should be thought unpolite: They will hear the truth reproached, and the name of God taken in vain; but dare not exercise reproof. This is shunning the cross, and practically denying Christ.

3. I enquire what it is to follow Christ? It is one of the peculiar advantages of christianity, that its duties are not only doctrinally, but practically taught in the example of Christ. He taught in so familiar a manner, that it is easy to see what he believed. He believed and taught, that God is supreme, and that he ought to be loved and submitted to, as such; that the law, in all its extent, is perfectly just; that religion is of a benevolent, disinterested nature; that men are naturally in a state of enmity with God; that an interest in his atonement is the only way of acceptance; that all true life is to be enjoyed through him; that he is the supreme head of his kingdom, and that the subjects of it are to be governed by his laws. To follow Christ, is to believe as he did: And not only so, but to have the same mind as was in him; that zeal for God's honor; that longing desire for the salvation of sinners; that love to bitter enemies; that meek, humble temper which he manifested. Most persons desire to make some noise and show in the world; but he was wholly destitute of worldly ambition. He was perfectly benevolent to all; to the godly he had a peculiar regard, and styled them his friends.——To follow

Christ then, is to have the same mind and temper which he manifested. It is to live and practice, as he did. He was devoted to the service of God and the good of souls. This seemed to be his business. He overlooked the injuries he received. He never neglected to speak the truth, to vindicate the honor of God, or reprove sinners, because he should be despised, hated and persecuted. He dealt with the greatest plainness, nor did he neglect to reprove his nearest friends. He was much in prayer to God. He strictly adhered to all divine institutions. When John objected to baptizing him, "Jesus said, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."—He was a most faithful friend, and did not neglect to reprove, lest it should offend. To follow Christ, is to walk and live as he did. It is to pursue the cause of God, though all hell beset the way.

I come now to consider,

2. The great importance of a strict observance of the duties pointed out in the text, of denying self, taking up the cross and following Christ.

It is a most reasonable demand, and it is most unreasonable and highly provoking to God not to comply with it. Indeed, one who will not deny self, for the honor of God, has no claim to religion, or the love of God. To dishonor God by the gratification of appetite; to make the honor of God and his cause give way to sordid appetite; to hold our peace and be afraid to appear for the name of God; because we must suffer by appearing openly for Christ, is not this being ashamed of him? Of him who endured the cross and despised the shame, to redeem his people?

The faithful discharge of the duties enjoined in our text, would reflect great honor on religion: It would be treating it as important. It would tend to convince others, that there is a reality in it.—

Many professors contradict the very nature of their profession. They own that God is the Supreme Good, and yet manifest a very strong attachment to the world.—It is also connected with peace of conscience and the Divine approbation. In this way, may christians expect the Divine presence. Finally, it is connected with eternal life. Unless we deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ, he will disown us. If we give up his cause, through fear of losing our natural life, we shall be sure to lose the life of the soul.

Improvement.

1. We must admit, if we have had a just view of our subject, that there is a great want of religion in the professors of it. Many evidently live too much conformed to the world: They do not deny fleshly appetites: They shun the cross. Let this be a solemn question, my brethren, whether dread of the cross is not a reason of the want of brotherly faithfulness, and that so little is said on the subject of religion? Does it not look, as to many things, as if you were ashamed of Christ and his gospel?

2. It is a greater thing to be truly religious, than many imagine. It is a great thing to live above the influence of the shame and reproach that may attend religion.

3. If men, living after the flesh must die, a great part are in the road to destruction.

4. We see what religion is: It consists in a likeness to Christ. Be exhorted then, O christians, to follow Christ, the captain of your salvation.

DISCOURSE VI.

JOHN I. 46.

And Nathaniel said unto him, can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, come and see.

THERE are doubtless some things in which, all good men essentially agree; or at least, do not oppose each other in their sentiments and belief. Our glorious Lord had at this time, entered on his public ministry. There were various opinions respecting him. Most persons rejected him, as an impostor: But some, impressed with a strong conviction of his Divinity, did not hesitate to venture life on the truth of his Divine Mission. Of this number was Philip of Bethsaida; who finds his own brother Nathaniel, and tells him of whom Moses in the law and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel had imbibed a prejudice wholly unsupported by scripture; that Nazareth was too mean a place for the residence of the Messiah. He had imbibed the Jewish opinion, that the Messiah would be born in Jerusalem, amidst regal pomp, and would there have been educated. But Galilee was the lowest Tetrarch, and Nazareth the most despised place. These things were so different from the views in which Nathaniel had been educated, that an objection immediately arose in his mind. Nathaniel appears to have been a pious, good man, though somewhat blinded by prejudice. Though Scripture pointed out the coming of Christ, exactly as he did come; yet he had been taught to believe, that he would appear in great earthly power and splendor.—There appear-

ed however, a wide difference between the pious Israelite and an impenitent sinner. When Philip says, come and see, Nathaniel readily complies: But impenitent sinners are so blinded by prejudice, that they will not examine, or listen at all.

The doctrinal observations to which I would attend, are these two:

I. That even good men may be under the dominion of great prejudices, but still,

II. They will possess some degree of candor.

I. Good men may be under the dominion of great prejudices. I will not say that they can be under such prejudices, as to shut their eyes to the great doctrines of grace, the lost state of the sinner, and the way of recovery, but as to certain modes and forms; as for instance, with regard to the proper posture of the body in prayer; the mode of baptism; the time of beginning the Sabbath, and many other things that respect the government of the church. Yet after all, that prejudices exist with respect to these matters, argues imperfection.

It may be useful to attend, (1.) to the sources of prejudices; then (2.) to the fact, that good men are subject to them.

(1.) One source of the prejudices of impenitent sinners, is their dislike to the character of God.—But this does not influence the good man. Though the old man in the christian is opposed, yet his heart is under the prevailing influence of love to God, in a just view of his character.

Good men are often biassed in their judgment in favor of one side, and often against truth, by being in a situation to look wholly on one side. We may be connected with those who hold up considerations in support of one side, and the mind may thus decide wrongly. When this is the case, the mind is prepossessed. There are very few

who can weigh with equal candor, the arguments for, and against their own opinion.

Another source of prejudices is the opinion of those, whom we esteem wise and good. Many, in times of awakening and attention to religion, imbibe the sentiments of those who have been instruments, in the hands of God, of promoting religion, and who have been considered as wise and good men. With many, reasoning is to no effect against what they esteem a sentiment embraced by good Mr. Stoddard, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Flavel, or Mr. Doddridge. People extend this to almost every thing: Good people formerly sang such a version of the Psalms, or such a tune, and many are ready to think it impiety to sing any other. They have even superstitiously extended the same mode of thinking to dress, to the manner of cutting the hair, and even to diet. And however lawful the use of tobacco may now be thought, the time has been, when smoaking it was viewed like the sin of witchcraft.

Education is another source of prejudice, which bars the mind against candid attention to truth, or, perhaps I might with more propriety say, the *want* of proper education. Hence we find that those, educated as Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, or Methodists, embrace the same principles, and with respect to many, it is to no purpose to reason with them against what they have received by tradition.

I proceed to show,

(2.) That even good men are exposed to prejudices, and often have their minds barred against improvement in the knowledge of the gospel. Facts recorded in Scripture, abundantly confirm this. We have striking instances to this purpose. The observance of certain institutions of the Jewish religion had been neglected by some pious

kings: The consequence was, that the Jews went on in the old track, till the days of Hezekiah and Josiah.

The conduct of the disciples was remarkable in this respect. They imbibed the sentiment, that Christ's kingdom was to be in part a temporal kingdom. This so blinded their minds, that they could not understand the plainest language respecting his death and the expediency of it: And when the event took place, they were exceedingly shocked at it.

We see the strong prepossessions of the Jewish Christians in favor of the Mosaic Rites, and particularly, circumcision. All those rites had evidently their accomplishment in Christ and the christian dispensation: But they did not know how to give them up.

We see this trait exhibited in christians at the present time, and this too even in persons of eminent piety. Many who have, in other respects, given evidence of real piety, have yet manifested a superstitious attachment to rites, and things which other christians do not suppose to be founded in the gospel. This has been the occasion of unhappy divisions among christians: This, together with the want of mutual charity and forbearance, has been the foundation of so many denominations, as exist among christians.

II. Christians;—men of real piety and sincerity, though they may, as well as others, be exposed to great prejudices; yet will they exercise some degree of candor. There is scarcely any thing more unfavorable to the sincerity of the christian profession, than an uncandid, dogmatical spirit. Christians are to be well established; yet they are at the same time, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. We see that this was the case

with the good Nathaniel. Though he had his objections to the proposal made him; yet he went, agreeably to the invitation of Philip.—The christian finds by experience, that the gospel spirit is a spirit of candor, and, sensible in some degree, of his own darkness and prejudice, he is willing to receive light from any one.

Our Savior's direction in dealing with those who are erroneous, supposes, that if they are christians, they will attend with candor to what is kindly administered to them, to convince them of their error.

Improvement.

1. We see the folly of making the opinion of any man a rule of our faith. We are to call no man master or father.

2. We have need to examine much, and not to make hasty determinations.

3. There are many things in which sincere christians may differ. As to the great essentials, they agree; but as to unessential points, they may entertain different sentiments. With respect to all such matters, we all ought to exercise christian charity and forbearance.

DISCOURSE VII.

MAT. IV, 4.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you.

THE discourse of our glorious Lord, from which the text is taken, had for the most part, an immediate respect to what was to precede and follow the destruction of Jerusalem. Many passages

of his discourse, however, cannot be explained, without supposing them to predict Christ's glorious appearance in the world. It seems that, before the destruction of Jerusalem, there were, agreeable to our Savior's prediction, many false Christs and prophets who stirred up the Jews to insurrection. John, whose epistles were some of the last of the sacred writings, says, that there were then many Antichrists and false prophets gone into the world. So the Bible fully represents, that "there is to be a falling away; that in the last days there shall be perilous times: Men shall give heed to seducing fables and doctrines of devils."—Our Saviour left on sacred record, this caution and exhortation, which we may consider, as applying to us; "take heed that no man deceive you," and urges this as a reason, "for many will come in my name, &c." that many would be greatly exposed to deception, and many would be carried away with it.

I propose to show,

I. That Satan has had, and continues to have, many instruments that are trying to deceive mankind.

II. In what things men are exposed to be deceived.

III. That men are greatly exposed to be fatally deceived.

IV. That it is important, that men should take careful heed against deception.

I. Satan has had, and still has, many instruments that are trying to deceive mankind. This was remarkably the case, after Christ's crucifixion. There were many impostors who appeared, pretending they were the Messiah, and gained many followers.—It was the case, also, early in the christian church, that many introduced fatal errors; such as the Manicheans, Gnostics, Arians,

&c. Indeed, all persons in any measure acquainted with the history of the primitive church, must be sensible, how many false teachers and prophets sprang up, by whom many have been drawn away and deceived; how many pretended prophets in the church of Rome, who have deluded many generations, and how many in the Protestant church, who have been trying to delude creatures into fatal error. There have been many, that have pretended to a spirit of prophecy, and that they were the witness spoken of in the Revelations. There are Arminius, Socinus and many others who have been trying to seduce mankind into fatal error. The same things are exhibited at the present day. It is a remarkable day for the prevalence of infidelity, agreeably to what is said in prophecy, that in the last days false teachers should arise, denying the Lord that bought them, and thereby affording the most striking evidence of the truth of that revelation which they deny. There are many at the present day, who are endeavoring to lead men into the belief, that there is no state of final punishment for the wicked. Indeed, it is a time in which error remarkably prevails: None ever saw a day in which there were so many forms of delusion as at present. How much sophistry is used to evade the truth, and how many false glosses are put on the plainest passages of scripture! In many of these glosses and evasions, there appears to be more than human art and subtilty.

I proceed,

II. To enquire, in what things men are exposed to be deceived?

This is the case in general, in matters that nearly respect their salvation. Those instruments whom Satan employs, may not have it in view to destroy; but Satan's aim is to destroy. Satan by his instruments, tries to deceive many as to their

state, and lead them to believe, that something may answer their purpose different from, and short of delight in God's law, character and government, together with humility and self-denial. Some suppose that a belief and persuasion that Christ died for them in particular, is sufficient. Some pretend that an essential change of heart is not necessary, and so have a confident hope of salvation, without any evidence of their having experienced such a change. The greater part of mankind have the same hope, though they may never have produced the fruit, which the gospel requires to substantiate it. Thus are attempts made daily, to deceive men, as to the foundation of their acceptance with God. And doubtless, many are led to believe that there is nothing in religion; that it is no matter how creatures believe, or how they live, for that all will be happy at last.—Thus we see, that almost all the deceptions of Satan respect the very foundation of the sinner's salvation.

III. I proceed to show, that men are greatly exposed to fatal deception,

1. From the great subtilty of Satan and his instruments. He can give all the advantage to error of which it is capable. Indeed, many who have been instrumental in promoting delusion, have been men of the first abilities, and have handled the delusion with great art and subtilty. I might notice Hume, Voltaire, and other deistical writers, and also several distinguished Arians and Socinians. Thus it appears from the great subtilty of Satan and those espoused to the cause of error, that men are greatly exposed to fatal deception: But,

2. They are especially so, from their great ignorance. Many pay so little attention to religious subjects, or have attended with so little can-

dor, that it is no wonder they are deceived.—Satan also, has many arts: He comes with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, with signs and lying wonders, and men are easily led astray thro' their wilful blindness and ignorance.

3. Men are especially exposed, as error is much more agreeable than truth. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.—Though to believers, truth lays open the most inviting prospects, and administers all possible comfort; yet it is otherwise to sinners. They wish there was nothing in religion. The thought of future punishment is so dreadful to them many times, that they would give all their possessions, if that would make it true, that there is no hell, or if they might be saved without being born again, and without holiness. It is exceedingly agreeable to men in a state of nature, to believe some of those forms of error which have been noticed. If men mean to live according to the course of this world, it is not strange that error prevails. The propensity to it is powerful, and if God would let men alone, they would universally embrace strong delusion, to their utter destruction. The Bible gives this representation of the subject. It warns us against the art and subtilty of Satan, who, by his lying wonders, would deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. It declares that when God lets them take their own way, they embrace delusion and darkness.

4. The danger and exposedness are great, as a majority of persons appear to split on this rock. The greater part of the world are carried away captive by Satan into fatal error. How many bow down to stocks and stones! How widely extended is the Mahometan imposture! How many Popish superstitions are there in the world! In Protestant countries, how many give up all religion!

How many deny the Saviour, reject the doctrines of grace, and build not on Christ!

In view of the danger arising from the several sources which have been enumerated, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

I come now to the

IV. And last thing proposed, which was, to consider that men have need to take careful heed against deception.

(I.) I shall consider how they are to guard, and (II.) suggest some motives to enforce the duty.

1. I enquire how we are to guard against being deceived?—It would be well for us to keep this in view, that we are possessed of strong prejudices against the truth, that we are greatly darkened in our minds, that our natural taste is an unsafe guide, which, however, is apt to have great influence in judging. People reject many of the doctrines of the gospel, because their hearts dislike them. Those same doctrines appear right, when the prejudice of the heart is subdued. We have need, therefore, to see that those prejudices do not bias our judgments.

2. We are to be established in this, that the Adversary has great subtilty, able to effect signs and lying wonders, and to work with all deceivableness of unrighteousness: He has subtle and powerful instruments, men of great abilities, who are studying to wrest the Scriptures. So, that whatever character we meet with, whether it be the Deist, the Universalist, the Arian, or any other person that opposes the gospel, we must be prepared to expect many false glosses, and great art of evasion.

We have need therefore, to be much on our guard, and thoroughly to examine for ourselves.

3. Though we ought to improve all helps, yet we are not to pin our faith on any man. We are to

see with our own eyes, to examine with seriousness and candor, and are not to make any hasty decision, always bearing it in mind, that our immortal interest depends on what, and how, we believe.

4. We are to read the Bible without prepossession. This has often powerful sway over the judgment. We ought to look into this holy book with candor. The general scope of it is not difficult to be understood: Let any pretend what they will of contradictions and absurdities, there is one scheme of truth which runs through the whole, in whatever distant periods or languages written.

5. Let us labor to look to the Father of Lights, to guide and direct our minds, and establish our souls in the truth. A thorough establishment in the truth would guard us against the wiles of the deceiver.

(II.) I shall urge the importance of taking heed that we are not deceived. We have seen, that the danger is great. A great part are carried away by its influence: And being ourselves in, or near a day, in which we are warned of deceivers, when we see a rock on which thousands have split, we have need to look out.

The evil consequences of deception are, in many respects great. It is yielding and subjecting ourselves to Satan's influence, who is seeking to ruin our souls.—It is dreadfully shutting our eyes to the light which it is of the last importance that we should see. Deception is often forever fatal to the soul. Many of those delusions which have been mentioned, are calculated to settle the soul in a state of security. But it is impossible that men should be in the exercise of religion, except as they are delivered from such a state, for it is in direct opposition to the faith that is saving.—There is reason to believe, that God often leaves

men to such delusion and to final hardness of heart: A situation the most deplorable that can be imagined. We have need to open our eyes to the truth, however painful it may be. How foolish, for a momentary repose, to expose ourselves to eternal horror.

Improvement.

1. We see what a wonderful thing it is, that any are saved! Indeed when we consider that christians have such subtle enemies, and that they are themselves so inclined to delusion, it is all of special, wonderful grace.

2. Though this is a day of such delusion, tho' error so much abounds; though many deny the Lord that bought them, and bring in damnable heresy; yet all this does not militate against the Scriptures, but is a confirmation of them.

3. We see what a great charge those have, who have children and youth committed to them to educate. It is important that the principles of truth be early instilled into their young and tender minds.

4. How dreadful the fate of those parents and teachers who lead others astray! How many thousands are there already led astray, by these means, into fatal delusion! Amidst these dangers, let us be exhorted to watch and take heed that no man deceive us.

DISCOURSE VIII.

1 TIM. VI. 6.

———But godliness with contentment is great gain.

THE Apostle Paul is, in this epistle to Timothy, whom he styles his son, describing the duties of a minister. He notices particularly, the various parts of the ministerial work, and in order more thoroughly to furnish him for this work, he points out the errors and evils which did and would prevail, and which would be attended with bad consequences, against which Timothy was to guard. See the first verse of the fourth chapter, and the verse preceding our text. The Apostle observes, that some persons of perverse minds suppose gain to be godliness, and so cloak their avarice under religion; but he gives them to understand, that the reverse is true. That instead of gain being godliness, godliness with contentment is great gain; that it redounds to great personal advantage.

I would,

I. Consider what is meant by godliness.

II. What by contentment.

III. The advantages, or gain of true godliness.

I. I am to speak of true godliness. It supposes a life of conformity to God. He has named his faithful followers after himself: In other words, godliness is true religion. But, the question may still return, what is true religion? I answer. It is conformity in temper and life, to the statutes and judgments of the law and gospel. It includes the graces of the spirit, such as faith, re-

pentance, joy in God, &c. with the holy fruits in conformity to the gospel.—But the question may again return, wherein does obedience to the law of God essentially consist. It is considered as conformity to God, who is said to be love. Indeed, it is directly summed up in love. But still the question returns, what kind of love? It is a love that is opposed to private, selfish affection. It unites to the whole good of being—to holiness, as being what it is—and therefore, regards God as supreme—and our neighbor as ourselves. It leads to all that regularity of life, and external conformity to the precepts of law, which is the natural dictate of love.

II. I enquire what we are to understand by contentment? It is something more than a Stoical insensibility to adverse scenes of Providence. It is a willingness to have things just as they are—to feel that they are right.

1. Contentment flows from a supreme regard to the will and glory of God and the cause of Christ. It supposes a belief that God does order all circumstances for his glory and the best good of his people.

In the exercise of christian contentment, the pious soul would not be willing to have things otherwise than they are; the prosperous or adverse events of life being what God has allotted. There can be no contentment under adverse scenes, if we regard our interest, pleasure or friends, more than God or his will. We must prefer the glory of God to any thing which we possess, in order to contentment.

2. Contentment is a disposition of mind to leave every interest with God—to feel that life, health, companions, children and friends, are all in safe hands—to feel entirely quiet, if things cross our

natural inclinations, and to have no disposition to carve for ourselves.

III. I proceed to show in what sense, godliness with contentment is gain.—It is so in relation to things of time—and it is so as to things of the future life.

1. It is great gain as to the present life, it enables us to sustain the burthen of unavoidable evils. We cannot shun evils altogether; but contentment enables us to bear them. The greatest burthen is doubtless a discontented mind under adverse scenes. Godliness with contentment will render any situation tolerable, and even comfortable.

It not only prevents anxiety, but adds a sweetness, peace and quietude of mind, which is the richest treasure. All the world without it, would be of little value. The peasant in his cottage, enjoying a contented mind, is happier than the aspiring prince, who dwells in a palace. If we had all the world, what would it be, unless we were content? If we are content, no situation can be very uncomfortable.

Godliness with contentment contributes to the enjoyment of this world, as it expands the mind, and interests us in the happiness of others. The man destitute of true godliness, is attached only to himself and his own little spot; he does not take that satisfaction which the good man does, who rejoices in the happiness of all around him.

It contributes to social happiness, and produces love and kindness in neighborhoods. It makes good husbands and wives, good parents and children, good rulers and people. Were this spirit to prevail, there would be a love of justice, and but few contentions and law-suits, which create so much unhappiness. It is a charitable and sympathetic spirit, producing kindness, and banishing

rough and unkind behavior. Under the influence of this spirit, rulers would be fathers to the people, and act under the influence of God's laws. People, also, would submit to rulers, and give them due honor. It would restrain all slanders and misrepresentations, make us tender of each other's character, and quiet many tumults.

There seems to be a prevailing disposition to disregard religious order, public worship, &c. as superstitious: And many of this character are ready to call themselves enlightened. But I think their light to be darkness. There is nothing in religion but what tends to the good of society. The observance of gospel institutions, family instruction and worship, though some may call it superstition, is necessary to train up a family to be a comfort and blessing.

We see then, that godliness with contentment is connected with great advantages, and wisdom will dictate the pursuit of it. If this life were the only life we should ever enjoy, it would be worth our while to live a godly life, to conform to God's commands, and to cultivate a spirit of contentment.

2. But the most important gain is with relation to another life. Godliness enables us to enjoy the good of all in this world a hundred fold: But it has the promise not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come. It is great gain, as it will enable us to escape that wrath which will be the portion of the ungodly. The future misery of such will be an evil beyond conception; for it will be complete and eternal.—But the godly, on the other hand, will inherit endless bliss. Heaven will be to them a state of perfect beatitude. There, as a fruit of true godliness, they shall be delivered from all the pains and sorrows, attend-

ant on the present life. Sin shall be completely done away, together with doubts, buffetings and temptations. Not one uneasy feeling or unsatisfied desire shall exist in their minds. They will ever be with Christ and with all the godly. Every interposing cloud being removed, they shall be admitted to the open vision and complete fruition of God, and shall inherit the riches of his heavenly kingdom. All this glory and good will be eternal, and so may well be said to be great gain.

Improvement.

1. We see that it is no vain thing to serve the Lord. True religion recommends itself in every view. It is our greatest wisdom and understanding. Without this, the world cannot afford much enjoyment: Without this there is no support in death—no consoling prospect beyond the grave.

2. We see that all those who try to overturn the principles of christianity, are not only enemies to the gospel, but to the welfare of mankind: They are enemies to every kind of social enjoyment, and blind to their own advantage, here as well as hereafter. There is nothing of any comparative value but religion and its fruits. There are many who affect to despise religion, but they only expose their folly. If we had all this world in our possession, without religion it would be of little avail.

3. Let me then urge, that whatever you pursue, you would make godliness with contentment your great object, and consider it as the one thing needful. This will afford you peace in any scene. It is the only way of life, and whatever you may gain without it, you must at last lose your souls.

DISCOURSE IX.

ACTS XVI. 16.

——And when she was baptized and her household,——

THIS is an observation concerning Lydia, and a part of the short history given of her embracing the gospel, complying with gospel institutions, and exhibiting the fruit of her religion in her charity and liberality. It seems by the special direction of God, that the Apostles had now come to Philippi, the chief city of Macedonia, and that on the Sabbath, they went out of the city by a river, a place of resort for prayer, and preached the gospel.—Lydia, it seems, was wrought upon: And upon her embracing the gospel, not only was she baptized, but her household.

The subject suggested by these words, is household baptism. It is a subject on which I have ever been loath to treat in a public manner, as I am unwilling to grieve my Baptist brethren.

But it is thought by some, that there is a call in Providence, to attend to the subject, while some are renouncing their baptism, and others enquiring into the subject. Indeed, I cannot feel myself clear in neglecting to hold up what to me, is light, while many are running into that which, I consider an error; though not an error which destroys my charity.

It is observable relative to these words, that there is no intimation that the Lord opened the heart of any of her household but herself at that time. It is natural to suppose, that the Apostle administered baptism to her household, on the

manifestation of her faith. It is said that it does not appear that Lydia had any infant in her family, or was ever married.—Were this certain, it would not alter the instruction from the example; as household, according to instituted, covenant grant, comprehended all the subjects of the family, born in the house, or bought with money, as well as the infant seed of the parents. House and household seem to be covenant terms, and of determinate meaning.

Abraham's household, it seems, were those on whom he exercised government; concerning whom he had a promise, that they should keep the way of the Lord.

Joshua's house were those under his authority, and concerning whom he might resolve, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

So that household baptism confirms the right and obligation of infants' baptism, as they belong to the household.

The doctrine which I shall attempt to establish is this, that household baptism is of divine institution.

I have already considered, what is to be understood by household: That it intended the subjects in the family—those whom the head of the family was to command and train up. The word was, no doubt, of determinate signification, signifying those born in the house, or bought with money.—All whose education we have the charge of; these are they, to whom the covenant extends. "I know him that he will command his children and household after him," says God, in Genesis.

In the following discourse I shall,

I. Attempt to shew, that household baptism is of divine institution.

II. Offer some things relative to the mode, in which water is to be applied in baptism.

I. I am to show, that household baptism is of Divine institution. It is often said by our Baptist brethren, that there is not a precept, or example for infant baptism from Genesis to Revelation, and make their challenge. It is, on the other hand, challenged to produce precept, or example for plunging in baptism: Yet our Baptist brethren think it plain, that God will own baptism in no other manner.

So, there is no direct precept, or example, in Scripture, for a woman's partaking of the Lord's supper, or of a Minister's being dismissed, or removed from office; yet these are subjects abundantly clear.

It is granted that there is not an example of the baptism of infants; yet we have sufficient example of household baptism; which amounts to the same thing: They are included. It is to be conceded, that if the covenant of grace, made with Adam, renewed to Noah, Abraham, &c. were in these dispensations, essentially different, and nothing could be argued from the administration under them, it would be rather strange, that this duty should not have been made more plain. But those in general, who reject household baptism, do not go to the foundation. The covenant grant is that, by which we are to determine the extent. Did we want to know, who are heirs to an inheritance, we should go to the testament, in order to determine. But under preceding dispensations, the administration according to covenant, extended to households, and there is an entire silence under the christian dispensation. This is a sufficient warrant still to extend the administration to households. But some may question whether the same covenant is still in existence, or whether baptism is a part of the administration of the covenant now,

as under the preceding dispensation. I would therefore, attempt to shew,

(I.) That the covenant that was revealed to Abraham, was the covenant of grace.

(II.) As circumcision was a part of the administration of the covenant under the law, so baptism is under the gospel.

(III.) The covenant did, under preceding dispensations, extend to the household of God's people, and they were the subjects of the administration.

(IV.) The blessings or extent of it have not been curtailed.

(1.) The covenant with Adam, Noah, and Abraham, was the covenant of grace, and the same that has been exhibited under the gospel. The blessings in the grant are essential blessings. The covenant is called repeatedly an everlasting covenant, and the words which God spake to a thousand generations; referring likely to those words, "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, &c."

It is evident, that this was the covenant of grace, and not superceded by the gospel state; as the Apostle introduces this to prove how we are justified and saved. The promise to Abraham was, that we might have strong consolation: viz. That christians, under the christian dispensation, might have strong consolation. This observation was after the Apostle had shewn, that the shadows and appendages of the covenant were abolished in Christ.

Further, the Apostle shows, that the Gentiles were grafted in, where the natural branches were broken off. Of consequence they are essentially under similar obligations, and entitled to similar privileges. What puts the matter in the clearest light, is the observation of the Apostle, that "the

Gentiles should be fellow-heirs." Of what? Why, of all the blessings of the Jews. They are said to be of "the same body," viz. Christ's, and "partakers of his promises," viz. the peculiar promises made to Abraham and his seed.

(2.) Circumcision was a part of the administration of the covenant under the Jewish dispensation; a seal of the covenant: So is baptism under the christian dispensation. Circumcision gave place to baptism.

These are ideas which I should suppose, no one could dispute. Both are external badges, or marks, which God has instituted, to be set on his people. They signify the same thing. If God has shifted his mark, that is no reason of alteration as to subjects.

That God has made no alteration, makes it evident then.

(3.) But this brings me to shew, that the covenant which has existed ever since the first intimations of mercy, did, under preceding dispensations, extend to the infant seed of God's people.

It appears to have been so before the flood. The posterity of Seth were considered in different visible relation from the rest of the world, and were called "the sons of God."

So, God took Noah's household into the ark. "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I found righteous before me in this generation."—Peter tells us, "a like figure whereunto baptism answereth."—

It is still more clear and express, if possible, in what follows. "God says, in his covenant, I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." "Every male child shall be circumcised." "All born in thy house and bought with thy money." "The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off." And therefore, in conformity to the law in this respect,

the pious Zachariah and Elizabeth circumcised John, the eighth day, and so Joseph and Mary the Redeemer. So, that according to preceding dispensations, it appears that the children of God's people were to be dedicated, and were considered as the subjects of the administration. If the same law is in force, then they are the subjects of it now, if it is not altered. This brings me to shew,

(4.) That the covenant, as to privileges and obligation, is not abridged.

Those who object are ready to say, where is your precept or example?

Example of household baptism has been produced.

But the question, with much more propriety, is to be urged on the other hand: Where is precept or example to show the covenant to have been abridged, as it respects the seed of God's people? If God has not done it, who has a right to exclude them? It is inconsistent that God should revoke the covenant. Indeed, it is said to be to a thousand generations, as it respects the seed of God's people:—visiting the iniquities, &c." Indeed, the Gentiles are not heirs of the promise, if thus altered.—

On the principle, that the covenant was abridged, it is strange the Jews should not have objected this against christianity, especially, as they placed unsuitable dependence on covenant relation. We find, with all their cavils, no objection on this footing.—

Such an alteration would be inconsistent with the peculiar privileges of the christian dispensation.

It is represented as a day of peculiar light and grace, and therefore, what would, above every thing else, enhance condemation.

But this must be a great abridgement of privileges.

Should any say, that the promises to the parent respecting his seed, and their being made the subjects of the administration of the covenant, are no privilege: This would be directly in the face of Scripture: Much every way.

David, and others of the godly, esteemed it a great privilege. "Though my house be not so with God," says he, &c. Indeed, many of the godly have had great comfort in the exercise of faith in the covenant.

It directly appears that there has been no alteration, as to the extent of the covenant, in respect to the seed of God's people.

The Prophet Jeremiah, in the 30th chapter, speaking of the blessings that should be enjoyed in the gospel day, says in the 20th verse, "Their children shall be as aforetime." What can this mean, but that they shall enjoy the same privileges under the christian, as other dispensations?

So our Saviour taught, that his kingdom, or visible church was in part made up. So the Apostle declares, that children of God's people are holy. He means, no doubt, in the sense, that the seed of God's people, under the preceding dispensations, were holy, viz. as expressing visible covenant relation.

These things being established, viz. that the covenant is, for substance, the same as that revealed to Abraham; that circumcision was a part of the administration, a mark that God set on his people; that baptism under the gospel was God's mark; The administration under the preceding dispensation extended to the children of God's people, and the covenant not having been abridged—It plainly follows then, that household bap-

tism is as clear a duty as household circumcision. We may consider that the command to God's people, to dedicate their children, is now as fully in force as ever, to give up their household in baptism —which now is another mark which God has ordered to be set on his people. To illustrate by a similitude that is of common use; suppose a husbandman were to commit his flock to a shepherd, directing him to apply a certain mark, and should say, by my flock, or by my sheep, I mean old and young. Should he afterwards direct a different mark, would this exclude any from his flock? If there was silence, it would be sufficiently clear; which, however, is far from being the case.

It must be presumption for a creature to abridge the obligation or privilege that God has in his covenant granted.

As to seal or external sign, the covenant knows no distinction as to the believing parent and household.

It is therefore without any covenant warrant, and indeed, a breach of covenant to separate them. I shall pass arguments from the New-Testament other than what have been stated, as they are common.

Before I proceed to speak of the mode, I shall attend to a few objections.

1. It is objected by some, that as there is no reason to view any without manifestations of change otherwise than in the gall of bitterness, there is an impropriety in the application of such a holy sign and seal to such. I have spoken of this, where I have attended to the nature of God's promises to the parents, as they respect the children. I shall therefore omit it, as it would lead to too great a length for the present occasion. I would only observe, that the objection lies no more against infant baptism than infant circumcision.

As circumcision is a seal of the righteousness of faith, an external sign of pardon and regeneration; so, those who hold that infants, according to divine institution, were to be circumcised, are under the same obligation as others, to answer the above objection.

2. The objection from the silence of the New-Testament has been answered.

3. It is objected, that the Apostles preached, "believe and be baptized."

But to whom did they so preach? Not to those who had already been baptized: That will not be pretended.—Was it to infant households? A man, preaching thus, would render himself ridiculous. So we should preach to unbelieving, unbaptized adults, who could understand and be treated with. In this way, where can the weight of the objection lie?

4. It is objected, that infant baptism is a novelty, or was not practised in the three first centuries. Though I do not lay great stress on human authority, where we have divine; yet I would observe, that the contrary is abundantly true, if we may believe the primitive fathers. They speak of it in such a manner, as to lead us to think it not disputed by any, in the three first centuries.

Irenæus, who must have lived near to the Apostolic times, and, as he himself says, was an intimate of Polycarp, argues from infant baptism, or regeneration, using the words as synonymous: He takes infant baptism as a given principle.

So, Origen, who lived in the third century, treating on original sin, says, "Are infants baptized according to the usage of the church, if they have nothing that wants forgiveness?"

Also, Cyprian, who lived in the third century, mentions, that it was a question in his day, wheth-

er infants might be baptized before the eighth day?

At a council on the subject, there were sixty-six ministers, and the question was not, whether infants were to be baptized, but what was the proper age?

If it were necessary, I could mention many more, such as Tertullian, Ambrose, Pelagus, &c.

I shall now say a few words respecting the mode of baptism.

Some suppose that it is essential to baptism, that the subject be plunged all over in water: And some have held, that in cases, where a hand, or any part of the body is not immersed, it is no baptism.

It is strange that creatures can make so much of modes and forms.

It is true, that these things are important, if expressly pointed out; yet they are not essential to the duty.

If, as the Methodists suppose, kneeling is the only posture, or mode, in which prayer is to be performed; yet I cannot conceive, that any can be so absurd as to suppose, that there can be no acceptable prayer in any other manner. I do not know, that any who hold to sprinkling, hold it essential to baptism.

I would examine the evidence for these different modes.

1. As to plunging, as I have said, there is not a precept, or example in all the Bible for plunging.

The very word in the original is otherwise, according to the Greek Lexicon.

My construction is according to the use of the word in the New-Testament. When it is said, washing of cups, platters and tables, it is baptism. Now the mode of washing tables is not by immersion.

It is urged, that John and Philip must have been baptized by immersion, because it is said, that they went down into, and came up out of, the water. I shall not here dispute the propriety of the translation. It cannot be supposed that, going down, meant immersion: If so, then Philip was baptized as much as the Eunuch. Besides, the baptism is spoken of, as distinct. They went down both into the water, and he baptized him. It might be by sprinkling.

It is urged, that John went to Jordan and Enon on account of the plenty of water. It is not said that this was for the purpose of baptism: But supposing it was, is it the method of God, in his revelation, to leave so important a matter to mere conjecture? But supposing we know that John practised in this way, yet what is that to our baptism, which is the christian baptism? There is no instance of christian baptism, except the Eunuch's, that looks at all that way.

The three thousand at the day of Pentecost, which was at Jerusalem, it is not at all probable, were baptized in this way.

So, of Paul,—The Jailer, and his household, &c.—But our Baptist brethren lay great stress on this passage in Coloss. ii, 12. "buried with him in baptism."

It is quite evident, that water baptism is not here intended.

The circumcision made without hands, intends the same as the baptism.

But were this granted, that things signify what they were instituted for, the argument is of little weight. Take, for instance, the Lord's Supper: We might invent some method, as the Papists do, that might more naturally represent the passion of Christ. But if this would prove the baptism, baptism must be the most natural representation;

Then it must be performed in various modes. John's baptism represented Christ's baptism with the Holy-Ghost and fire, which referred to the effusions of the spirit, with fiery appearances at the day of Pentecost, which was called pouring out of the spirit.

This would afford as strong an argument that baptism should be performed by pouring.

So baptism, I expect all will agree, represents the purification of the soul from guilt.—

When it is said, "having a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," it is likely that the words allude to baptism.

But if persons have not been baptized, I am not disposed to contend, if they choose to be plunged. But I think it not agreeable to that simplicity, which we find in other institutions. The arguments in favor of sprinkling's being the mode, are these.

1. It is most agreeable to gospel simplicity and the method of applying any thing to signify purification. Thus the application of blood was by sprinkling a small quantity. The partial application of water in baptism, was intended to signify purification. So, when our Saviour washed his disciples' feet, Peter objected: Our Saviour tells him, "except I wash thee, thou hast no part with me." I say, it is analagous to God's institutions.

2. There are various passages in the Old-Testament, that have an ultimate reference to that work of grace, represented by baptism; as the passage in Ezekiel; "I will sprinkle clean water, &c." so that prediction respecting Christ, Isaiah lii. 15. "So shall he sprinkle many nations, &c." which is supposed to refer to the christian baptism. It is supposed, that an explanation of this led the Eunuch to the idea of baptism. The repre-

sentation in regard to Philip, is that his instructions were an explanation of the words read.

These are some of the considerations in support of sprinkling. After all, I cannot fully persuade myself, that it was the design of God to confine persons to any exact mode.

Improvement.

1. We see, if it is so, that God has thus extended his covenant to the seed of his people, how it enlarges the idea of his grace! How comfortable such an idea is to a believing parent, who feels his heart united to the good of his children!

2. We have reason to fear, that the adversary has great hand in making men's differences about modes and forms, a bar to fellowship. We have reason to think, that as the spirit of God is poured out, it will tend to break down these bars.

3. If the covenant in this view is a mean, as the gospel seems to consider it, it will be an important mean of up-building the church in the latter day.

It is to be expected, that Satan will try to misguide even good men, to renounce the covenant in this view.—It may therefore, be a question, whether many are not hurried on, without proper examination, to renounce their baptism.

4. It may be a question, whether the inconsistent conduct of those, who profess to believe in household baptism, does not promote infidelity in this respect?

5. How important the motives of parents to discharge covenant duties to their children.

Let me then press it on parents and on churches.

DISCOURSE X.

ROM. v. 11.

——By whom we have now received the atonement.

THE grand design of God, in his moral government, and indeed, in creation and providence in general, was, no doubt, to give a full display of himself.

In speaking from these words, I shall

I. Consider some of the grounds of the necessity of an atonement.

II. The immediate design of it.

III. What there was in what Christ did and suffered, that had a more special reference to the work of atonement.

I. What was the ground of the necessity of an atonement?

1. It was necessary to secure the end for which God did create, and continues to preserve and govern, viz. to exhibit to view his holy, benevolent feelings, and to appear to have an aversion to sin and regard to the good of his kingdom. If God had dispensed with the law as to penalty, and pardoned the sinner without expressions of his anger and indignation, he would have failed in expressing the feelings of his heart; and so, of answering the ends of government.—Indeed, he could not in his providence, have established a character of spotless purity and infinite aversion to sin. Should it be said, that obedience to the law would answer every purpose of law.—Why then was it necessary, that there should be any

penal part? If it does not contain distinct ideas, and illustrate God's character in a view, in which it could not be fully illustrated by the preceptive part of it, then nothing would answer the ends of the atonement, that did not respect the penal part. —But if we suppose that God, in pardoning, might dispense with penalty, I see not why he might not give up the preceptive part, and in short, the whole law, and have required no atonement.—The Bible represents that it has been the purpose of God to exact the full demands, that one jot or tittle should not fail.

2. Not only would it be inconsistent with the designs of God's government and creation, to pardon without atonement; but there could be, from God's providence in that, no grounds to believe his aversion to sin. It is a common and, I believe, a true maxim, that actions speak louder than words. So, that though the law contains a prohibition, a mere prohibition does not manifest any great degree of dislike. Nay, it is no certain evidence of dislike at all.

No doubt, many in a legislative capacity, make laws to suppress vice, who nevertheless violate them.—Any one may see, that the least degree of remove from indifference, as to virtue and vice, may, prohibit vice. So a threatening, however great, that is not executed, does not afford evidence of dislike, or any degree of displeasure against those whom the threatening respects.—

There are, in some states, laws prohibiting the profanation of the Sabbath under severe penalties. But no attention being paid to the execution of them, they do not on the whole, manifest any dislike.—

So, also, unless God, in some way, act out his infinite aversion to sin, his government does not

tend to enforce the belief of the purity of his nature.

3. To suppose that God should pardon without atonement, would bring his government into disrespect. So to manage affairs, is making no distinction between the holy and unholy. Whatever laws are made, or penalties annexed, yet if the executive part is neglected, such government does not tend to hold up terror to evil-doers; but will occasion disrespect.—If a parent is often giving out commands and threatnings, but does not execute them, his children will disregard and soon despise his threats. It is so in the government of communities: If the executive part of government is not enforced, the government will sink into contempt.

4. To pardon without atonement, is to give up law, and consequently the divine character, as law is a transcript of it. The law, in its threatenings, expresses infinite disrespect and aversion. The law is not maintained, but as this aversion is expressed in sensible fruits; nor the character of the Deity, as expressed in the law. The law would be made void, if the atonement did not exhibit some sensible fruits of displeasure. The Apostle could not, otherwise, consistently say, we establish the law, through the doctrines of pardon and faith. The promises of God would be against the law, and what Christ did, instead of magnifying the law, would bring reproach upon it.—Thus, from a variety of considerations, it appears, that an atonement was of absolute importance. And it may be observed, that nothing would avail to this purpose, but one that should afford as strong sensible fruits of infinite aversion and hatred of sin, as the execution of the threatening of eternal vengeance: In other words, an infinite atonement was absolutely requisite. Should any thing

of a finite nature have been proposed, had angelic nature, or indeed, the universe of created beings suffered, all this would have come infinitely short of expressing the divine hatred of sin. On the principle, that the threatening was everlasting punishment, and sin of infinite demerit, satisfactory atonement could be made only by Christ. I am sensible that it is objected by some, if the atonement was made by submitting to the penal as well as preceptive part of the law, then what is saved? I answer, that the suffering as it respects the elect, bears no proportion. But the dignity of the person rendered infinite suffering unnecessary, to give even stronger expressions of displeasure. But, perhaps, it will be said, that if the expense was not in suffering, yet it was in dignity: If Christ was by his sufferings, divested, eventually, of any of his dignity. But the Bible leads us to a very different view of the matter. The glory and dignity of Christ were far from being, in any degree, exhausted or diminished.

I now pass,

II. To the immediate end of the atonement. This is a point of great importance, in which many differ.

Some suppose that Christ died to make God abate something of the requirements of the law. Others suppose, that Christ came to illustrate this point, that the law is practicable and suited to our nature and circumstances. But Christ, as God, would not be a proper person in this view. Doubtless, the design of the atonement was, to illustrate the same thing that the punishment threatened to the sinner, would have done; otherwise, he would not have magnified it; as what he should do would not have respect to that, in which the law required satisfaction. But the design of the atonement was, to express the divine feelings and aversion to

sin, and is itself a declaration of God's righteousness, more especially in the penal part of the law. Of this nature the Apostle considers the matter in the epistle to the Romans.—"To declare at this time, I say, his righteousness." This will appear, when we consider, that the reason why an atonement was necessary, was not because God delighted in the misery of his enemies. God had goodness enough in his heart, to have dispensed with punishment, if he could in this way, have been just to his character. It was necessary that God should be made to appear perfectly righteous.—All the shadows of the atonement were adapted to express the divine feelings and righteousness; as when God turned Adam out of Paradise, and clothed him with the skins of beasts; his treatment of the Israelites at Sinai; Phineas' making atonement; and the institutions of the tabernacle and temple-worship. But all these were but shadows of the great atonement. As the shadows were adapted to express God's displeasure against sin, so was the substance, viz. Christ's whole life and death. So that the Apostle might well say, that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation. This being the nature of the atonement, the very offer of mercy on the footing of such a declaration, tends to sink the character of the sinner, and exhibits strong expressions of the divine aversion.—What was necessary to complete the atonement was, that God should, by it, as fully express his hatred of sin, as if the punishment had been endured by the sinner.

It is objected by some, that to suppose Christ submitted, in any sense to the penalty, and made full and complete satisfaction and atonement, destroys all the grace. But in my view, satisfaction or redemption, by which I mean the same, is so far from being inconsistent with grace, that it is

essential to it, in the pardon of the sinner. Divine mercy is by no means opposed to righteousness, and without this, it cannot, as we have seen, be vindicated. It would, in this respect, be derogatory to the Divine character, for the Deity to make no distinction in the executive part of his government, between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane. It would be viewed no mercy in a state, for the executive part of government to pay no attention to the law and penalties.

If complete satisfaction and redemption destroys free grace, it will follow, that if there was any satisfaction made, grace would be lessened in the same proportion.

When we consider the atonement as meant only to illustrate God's righteousness by an expression of his feelings, all that Christ did was of the nature of a declaration. If the atonement Christ illustrated the evil and demerit of sin, satisfaction of this nature is in no measure, of the nature of the payment of a debt. But the more full, the more free does grace appear. More especially, there does not appear any inconsistency in the doctrine of full satisfaction with free pardon, when we consider, that Christ's atonement and righteousness are not, in a personal sense, made over to the creature.

I pass to the

III. Head, which was, to consider what there was in the life and sufferings of Christ that had a special, immediate respect to the work of atonement. It seems to be a sentiment entertained of late, that the obedience of Christ, illustrated in sufferings, was all that was requisite. But it may be observed from the following considerations, that sufferings, as expessions of the divine feelings, were what had a special reference to the work of atonement. I do not mean but that it was neces-

sary that Christ's offering of his blood, or life, should be accompanied with perfect purity. Thus Christ is represented "as holy, harmless, and undefiled." And not only so, but the perfect obedience of Christ was requisite to the justification of the sinner. Two things were requisite to the sinner's justification. First, that there should be atonement for sin, or the threatened displeasure expressed in sensible fruit, and then, a perfect righteousness. Mere freedom from guilt does not entitle to the reward of life.—I am clear in the opinion, that when we attend to the Bible, we shall find that the atonement, in a special manner, respected sufferings.

This was what the law required, or rather, threatened in case of disobedience. An atonement would not be calculated to answer the ends of the law and to magnify it, if it had no respect to the threatening, and did not illustrate those ideas that would have been illustrated in the execution of the threatening on the sinner.

It is inconsistent to suppose, that obedience was the only thing, or even principal thing; for there would be no direct tendency in Christ's submitting to the requisitions and precepts of the law, to honor the penalty, or illustrate the strength of displeasure. If it was necessary that there should be a penalty annexed to law, it is certain, in case of disobedience, that it should be honored in sensible fruits; otherwise it would be of no use.—If, as some suppose, the whole of law, or the deas asserted in it, were vindicated in Christ's obedience, then what need was there of any thing more? Why any threatening? But to suppose this to be given up, or the principle that it might, is subversive of the necessity of atonement. If the penal part could be dispensed with, which was certainly the grand thing in the way of divine favor to our

fallen race, it requires more wisdom than I am master of, to see why any other part might not as well be dispensed with, or indeed the whole. I see not how the law could be said to be magnified by so partial an illustration. Besides, the Bible fully asserts, that the law has not failed, in one jot or tittle. Further, it is evident that the sufferings of Christ had a more special reference to the work of atonement, as the Bible fully represents him as a substitute, or as "acting in our stead, bearing our sins, &c." If he acted in our stead, then he suffered so as to afford as strong an expression of displeasure, as our suffering would have done. That Christ acted in our stead, is fully asserted, or implied in numerous passages of Scripture. See Mat. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. 2 Tim. ii. 6. in which passages Christ is represented as giving himself for a ransom. It is observable, that the word here rendered, *for*, signifies *in the room and stead of*. There are many other passages that fully carry this idea. See 1 Peter iii. 18. He is also said to "die for the ungodly;" "to bear our sins in his own body on the tree:" "By whose stripes we are healed." See Rom. v. 8. Christ is said to be made "sin for us, who knew no sin." See 2 Cor. v. 21. i. e. he suffered as a sinner, was in the same sense a sinner, or sin, as the believer is made righteous. So Christ is said to be made a curse.

It is evident, that the atonement consisted especially in the sufferings and death of Christ, from the offerings of atonement under the Jewish dispensation. The sin-offering of a Jew, over which sins were confessed and the beast put to death, was meant in his stead. Indeed, it is said, that the blood which is said to be the life, makes atonement. See Lev. xvii. 11. There are two things signified by these shadows of the atonement. The

atonement especially consisted in suffering. The beast was to have his life poured out, and the most essential part was to be burnt with fire. Fire was applied as an emblem of wrath. Thus we often read of "the fire of God's wrath, indignation and jealousy." Hereby was represented that Christ died for our sins; that he suffered the fruits of God's displeasure, due to our sins. This will appear when we consider, that these sacrifices were applied, as shadows of the great atonement. Thus Christ is said to be our passover, and is called a high-priest. Indeed, the Apostle speaks of Christ as a sin-offering. See Heb. ix. 1, 9, 11, 12, 23.

The last thing that I shall offer to show, that the sufferings of Christ had a more special reference to the work of atonement, is, that Christ is said to redeem by his sufferings; to ransom and to purchase by the same means. In all these cases, sufferings are referred to. Thus Christ is said to purchase his church with his own blood. See Acts xx. 26. "Redeemed through the blood of Christ." Eph. i. 7. "Brought nigh by his blood." Eph. ii. 13. So Christ is said to "make peace by the blood of his cross." And therefore, it was a maxim with the Apostle, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Christ is said "to be wounded for our transgressions, and that by his stripes we are healed." The Bible no where speaks of our being redeemed and ransomed by obedience, exclusive of sufferings.

Improvement.

If we have had a just view of the nature of the atonement, the whole affair is of wonderful grace. The gospel plan, in this view, is wonderful in its contrivance; that the favor which God bestows on such vile creatures, should even manifest displeasure.

Neglect of gospel offers must be peculiarly heinous. No wonder Christ should say, "this is their condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have chosen darkness rather than light. Had I not come and spoken unto them, they would not have had sin." Such neglect is a contempt of God and of Christ's blood. We see, that all that Christ has done, will but serve to sink us lower in hell, if we neglect and despise the offers of mercy. —It is strange in this view of the atonement, that any should entertain a thought, that there is salvation in any other way, but through Christ. If we have had a just view of the atonement, to believe in Christ, supposes that we are suited with God's law and government. How important a prize have sinners put into their hands! Be exhorted then, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life.

DISCOURSE XI.*

HEB. IX. 22.

And without the shedding of blood there is no remission.

IT must be granted on all hands, that a thorough knowledge of the nature and design of the doctrine of the atonement, is of the highest importance. It is therefore, a subject worthy of frequent

* The reader is, doubtless, solicitous to know fully the sentiments of Dr. Swift on the important subject of the atonement, and will not be displeased to find another discourse on the same subject here added. It appears to have been written since the former.

attention. Especially at a time, when many implicitly deny any atonement at all, and others hold to sentiments nearly subversive of the doctrine, and are at the same time rapidly spreading those sentiments in this country. Though these persons hold that Jesus was Christ, yet they contend that he came merely to delineate, by his example, the path of religion.

The Apostle, in the chapter from which the text is taken, is treating on the nature and necessity of an atonement: He urges the necessity of an infinite atonement; that it was necessary that the Mediator should be "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." He urges the necessity of his suffering in order to atonement. "It became him by whom and for whom are all things, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering."

He urges the necessity of the sufferings of Christ, in the work of atonement, from the shadows and types under the law. He observes that almost every thing was purified by blood under the law—the testament, table and tabernacle; and adds in our text, "that without the shedding of blood there is no remission." He refers to the institutions under the law; that according to them, blood must be shed for remission. The Apostle is proving by this, that the blood of Christ alone cleanseth us from all sin.

Doctrine:—A complete and infinite atonement was necessary to pardon.

In the ensuing discourse, I shall

I. Make some observations respecting atonement.

II. Respecting pardon, or remission.

III. Respecting the grounds of the necessity of atonement in order to pardon.

I. I shall make some observations respecting atonement.—God did not require an atonement, because he was gratified by the suffering of a transgressor. This is very far from the design of God, in punishing any. Indeed, punishments ought never to be dictated by such a principle, in any case. It is true, that in depraved creatures, a spirit of revenge is gratified by punishment; but it is a spirit absolutely inconsistent with the infinite purity of the Deity.—Nor could the design of atonement be, to move the Deity to dispense with the penalty of the law, or abate from its strict demands, as some seem to imagine. It would be blasphemous to suppose, that God should want any thing to move him to save the sinner, if consistent with his character and justice. If it was not, it would be blasphemous to suppose, that Christ would wish to move him in this way.—Besides, the Bible expressly declares, that he came "with the law written on his heart—to magnify it and make it honorable."——What then could be the design? I answer. It was evidently to illustrate and manifest the feelings of the Deity, respecting his own character, law and government, and to express his aversion to sin. Had God embraced the sinner, and received him into communion and favor, it would look as though God had fellowship with sin. Such conduct would have eclipsed the glory of the Divine character, and been a sacrifice of the law. What was necessary as to atonement was, that it should express fully, hatred and disapprobation of sin, and delight in holiness. This appears from all the shadows of atonement, to have been the design. With this view did Moses make atonement, as also Phineas.

So the sacrifices under the law, were all adapted to express hatred and disapprobation of sin.

It may be asked, whether the atonement consists in Christ's obedience, or sufferings, or both? Some insist that the whole stress is to be laid on the obedience of Christ. But if the nature and design of the atonement were such as have been mentioned, then it could not consist in obedience merely. Suffering was calculated to express displeasure, and maintain the honor of the law.—It is said that obedience expresses approbation of the whole law. But the Bible lays, as it were, the whole stress on suffering. Christ is said "to have borne our sins in his own body, and to have been wounded for our transgressions:" His people are said to be "redeemed by his blood." In the types and shadows of the Old-Testament, the atonement is represented by suffering.

If, by atonement, we understand the whole of that work which is the foundation of justification, then it includes both obedience and suffering. But if we intend merely, satisfaction to the law, as a foundation for exemption from punishment, or pardon, it consists wholly in suffering: This alone was calculated to express displeasure.

II. Our next inquiry is respecting what is intended by remission, or pardon. It is that act of grace, by which a sinner is, in the actings of faith, held in divine embraces, the burthen of guilt removed, and the soul enjoys a divine peace.

It has been made a question, whether we expeperience pardon and justification?—or whether it is a mere act and establishment of Deity? I allow, that in pardon, the soul receives an earnest of God's everlasting favor; so that this serves as a pledge and infallible token of the complete deliverance of God's people from the bondage of guilt.

Who, though they may feel at times, the weight of guilt, yet are secure of final recovery.

1. I conceive this distinction between remission, or pardon, and justification. Justification is to be understood in a larger sense; pardon merely, as an acquitance from the debt.

2. The righteousness and atonement of Christ are the only meritorious ground.

3. It contains in it a final discharge and acquittance, or rather secures it.

4. Yet it is a progressive work. The soul is often by declension, shut away, and God hides his face. God's people often stand in need of renewals.—

Indeed, remission, I understand to be, the soul's feeling the removal of guilt, and experiencing a sense of God's favor and reconciliation.

III. I am to attend to the grounds of the necessity of an infinite atonement. There are many at the present day, as indeed there always have been, who are stumbled at the doctrine of atonement; because they do not see the evil of sin, and the just demerit of it. On this account, the cross was a stumbling block to the Jews. Let us then examine, whether the light of nature and the Scripture leads to the conclusion, that there can be no forgiveness without an atonement.

1. An atonement is the only possible medium, thro' which God can appear propitious. People in a state of ignorance of God and stupidity, as to their sin, may see no need of an atonement: But when the sinner is convinced of the dreadful nature of sin, and pressed with guilt, he can see no relief from the law. The Apostle therefore declares, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in God's sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. When the sinner attends to the character of God, as held forth in the law, or indeed, as displayed in creation and providence, God ap-

pears, in these, clothed in dreadful anger. Indeed, the display of God's pure and holy character is adapted, in its nature, to produce a sense of guilt and fear of wrath. There is no possibility that a sinner should enjoy peace, under a realizing sense of his situation.

2. For God to pardon without atonement, would look as though God was as much pleased with sin as holiness. Should we see one associate, as intimately with persons of a vicious character, as with those of a contrary character, and admit them to as great favor, we might naturally suppose that it was, at least, not disagreeable. If God is a holy being, it must appear wholly derogatory to his character, to admit impenitent sinners to his favor.

3. Therefore God cannot pardon without an atonement, as this would subvert the great end of his works, which are designed to display and illustrate God's glory.—Indeed, it would subvert the ends of God, as to the happiness of creatures. The glory of God is often represented, as the great end of his works. By his glory is here meant his declarative glory. This was his end in what he did, with regard to Pharaoh, and in the deliverance of the Israelites. This was the very end of Christ's coming into the world. It is impossible that creatures should enjoy God, except as the glory of his character is displayed.

4. Should God receive the sinner into favor, without an atonement, it would subvert all the ends of his government, which are to discountenance vice, and express the feelings of the great Law-giver towards it. If vice goes unpunished, it takes off restraints. We no longer feel that vice exposes us to evil, or are led to have an idea of its ugly nature. If crimes are punished, it tends to keep alive the idea of their ugly, hateful nature,

but if the penalty of the law is dispensed with, and crimes go unpunished, in the same proportion, these restraints will be removed.

5. It would be at the expence of law to pardon and receive the sinners to favor without atonement. The law threatens death to the transgressor. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." To dispense with the penalty, is treating the law as not good. The repentance of the sinner does not help the matter. This, however complete, does nothing to satisfy for what is past, any more than a man's paying future contracts would discharge immense past debts.

An objector may perhaps say, that men in authority sometimes dispense with the strict severity of law. In many cases, it is true, they do. But it is a practical acknowledgment, that the law is, in relation to every case, perfectly just. Otherwise, such conduct would be wrong. But the law of God is altogether perfect, and must be respected.

6. For God to be propitious without an atonement, would be inconsistent with his truth; for he has said that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified: He that believeth not shall be damned: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

Improvement.

1. We see then, that there is no possible hope for any creature, but in and through the atonement. The natural state of every creature is a state of wrath, and he must perish, after all that he may do, only as he gives all up. He is, without Christ, under wrath and condemnation, and an heir of hell.

2. From the view which we have had of the subject, we see that however complete the atone-

ment, it does not derogate from free grace in pardon. They are perfectly consistent. This is an objection with some against the christian doctrine of atonement.

3. We are furnished with an answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? We must not go about to establish our own righteousness, but embrace the atonement, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other name. Salvation is to be found in no other.

4. Let us examine ourselves, whether we have taken refuge in this great ark of safety. Here then let me urge you to come: Here is complete redemption. Christ is a lovely, glorious Saviour: He is able to save to the uttermost: He is a wonderful Saviour: His salvation is freely offered: He is free and ready to do all; and without him, we must eternally perish.

DISCOURSE XII.

1 COR. XII. 13.

For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one spirit.

IT was the leading design of the Apostle in this epistle, to humble and reprove the pride of the Corinthians, who appeared to be lifted up with the gifts of the spirit, and especially, the gift of tongues. He considers that these gifts argued a state of imperfection: That the gift of tongues was one, of the least importance, to the edification

of the church; that the Corinthians had no reason to be lifted up, as all christians are honored with the operations of the same spirit. Some had one gift; others another; while all at the same time possessed the most important gifts of holy love and grace. However different the operations, all worked one and the same spirit: All centered in one great end, and as so many members in one body, all served though different ways, the same purpose. The fruits and effects also, of their religion were essentially the same, being all baptized into one body, by the same spirit, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, and drinking into one spirit.—The sentiment contained in the text is this, that all christians of whatever age or nation, have essentially the same religion and experience. There is, in various respects, a difference as to manner of exercise; yet the essential nature of exercise and enjoyment is the same.—In the ensuing discourse, I shall show,

I. That there is a difference, as to manner of exercise and experience, among Christians: but

II. Their exercise and enjoyment are essentially the same.

III. I shall proceed to prove the doctrine, that all christians, of whatever age or nation, have essentially the same religion and experience.

I. There is a difference as to manner of exercise and experience, among christians in various respects.

First, as to law-work, or what precedes a work of conversion: Some are probably converted in infancy, and can never tell of a law-work. Among those who do experience such a work, there is, in various respects, a difference. Some are struck at once, and very suddenly awakened. Some experience conviction but a short time previous to

their conversion. Some are exercised with much more terror than others: And others have doubted of their state, because they did not experience that terror. Some have had their hearts laid open in a more striking view, and some have been brought to conviction by extraordinary means. But in all these cases, a law-work is experienced, which is essentially the same.

With respect to the manner of the change, some are transported at once and swallowed up.—Some more sensibly exercise one grace at first; others another.—Some exercise various graces in quick succession.—Some are always more sensible of the exercise of some particular graces.

The exercises of some are more pure and unmixed. Those of others have a great deal of animal passion, and some kind of impulse. Some are greatly agitated in body.

Some have a more clear establishment or assurance than others. Some live the greater part of their time in doubt about their state. Some from their natural make, are more inclined to doubt than others. Indeed, as to manner, there is great variety. But,

II. As to the essence of religion and experience, it is the same in every age, sect, or nation.—Different nations and people have exceedingly different tastes in other respects, as to food, society, &c. There is scarcely a likeness to be found. The people of many nations have no likeness of taste, so as to form social connexions: But as to the exercise, or experience of grace, it is the same, whether in Jew or Greek, bond or free. On this subject, they have the same kind of taste and enjoyment; so that when they converse together, they understand each other, and have fellowship together.—In proportion as they possess religion, they love God supremely: They see in him

a supreme excellence and glory: They have nothing but what they can give up: They have strong desires and breathings after God, and his character appears to them the same.—Sin appears to them exceedingly hateful: They have the same kind of humility and repentance. They groan out under the burthen and load of sin.—They have the same view of God's word and law, which are to them subjects of great delight.—They feel the same kind of submission and patience: They can leave all with God and have no disposition to carve for themselves.—They have the same kind of faith in God's government, view him at the head of all affairs, and repose in him a sweet confidence.—Their trust and faith in Christ are alike: They see alike, as to the fulness of his atonement, and can venture all upon it.—They see alike and talk alike, as to the great doctrines of grace, such as depravity, the impossibility of acceptance on the footing of law, the doctrine of special grace, the sovereignty of mercy, and acceptance only through Christ. Christian writers of different nations may differ, as to modes and forms, but when they treat of the way of life, they manifest that they drink into one spirit.—Christians have the same kind of hope and joy: Their hope is a pleasing anticipation of glory: Their joy centers in God.—They have also the same kind of darkness and hidings. When David and Job describe their distress under hiding, every christian knows that he has, in some degree, felt the same.—The same may be said with respect to the christian warfare, described by the Apostle and others. There is in every christian, the law of the mind, and the law of sin, and every christian does, of consequence, feel the struggle arising from their opposite natures.——All drink into one spirit, as all enjoy the same communion with God, the same

earnest of the spirit, the same divine peace and pardon. This life and joy are common to all christians.—Lastly, religion and christian experience are the same in all, as to external fruits and effects. Love to Christ will dispose all christians to obey him, and will induce them to perform acts worthy of his religion. In this, as well as in other respects, christians live and act much alike.

III. I proceed to prove the doctrine, that christians, of whatever age or nation, have essentially the same religion and experience.

1. This appears evident from this consideration, that it is all the fruit of the same spirit, and so, will be of the same common nature, "working," as the Apostle expresses it, "one and the same spirit." Their enjoyments must be the same, as they drink into one spirit. If christians of different nations, customs and climates, differed as much in their religion and experience, as in their other tastes and habits, it would be an argument against religion; if they had a love, repentance, faith, and joy of a different nature, it would be argued that the same divine spirit did not produce the same fruit.

2. When we take a view of christians of different ages and languages, when we attend to the experience of the godly in distant ages, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Job, David and others, we see that their religion was just such a religion, as the godly now experience. When the devout christian reads the psalms, and perceives the breathing of David's soul after God, his delight in the law, ordinances, and worship of God, and his mourning the hiding of God's face, he is constrained to acknowledge, that he does, or has felt something of the same.—The Apostle gives a brief view of the godly of different ages, and signifies to us, that they all had the same faith,

were engaged in the same pursuit, loved God supremely, and had their desires center in him.—So, when we read the lives of christians—of martyrs in Greece, Rome, Germany, France, Bohemia, or England, we see that they died in the profession of the same religion, to which we have devoted our lives. The christian can now, as it were, have communication with those, who, in distant countries, are laboring for the more extensive spread of christianity: He can feel united to them, interested in their measures, and gratified with their success, realizing that they drink into the same spirit. And when we read the life and experience of Flavel, Edwards, Brainard, and others, we see that their religion is of the very same nature with that now experienced.—On the whole, from what has been said we may fairly conclude, that though there may be unessential differences among christians, as to forms, modes, &c. yet their religion and experience are essentially the same.

Improvement.

1. That the godly of all ages have the same kind of religion and experience; that they have the same peculiar affections, shows to me, that there is a reality in religion, and that it is of divine original. If it was not from the same spirit, how can we account for the fact, that a set of men have existed, unconnected with each other, yet actuated by the same feelings, and at the same time, possessed of a spirit and taste distinct and different from the rest of the world?

2. We have no ground to doubt the reality of our religious experience, because our exercises are, in their manner, different in some respects from those of others. But some have been in great doubt on this account. They have been

ready to doubt of their ever having experienced religion, because they have not had all the same lively feelings as others.—

Some are ready to doubt of others' being christians, because they have not had such flights as they have experienced.—While others, on the other hand, seem ready to reject, because they see animal passion.—Some doubt because they do not find all the particular exercises of religion, in just such a particular order. But we are liable to misjudge in this, as in other instances. Though the nature of the spirit's operation is the same; yet the manner may be different in respect to different persons. We are to judge from the nature of our christian experience. We are to ask ourselves such questions as these. Is our love to God supreme? Do we hate sin for its own sake? Do we long after God? Do we delight in holiness? Do we long to be conformed to God, and delight in obedience to his will?

3. We see the source of divisions among professors. It is the want of religion. This is a peculiar band of union. Should it prevail in its power, it would have a surprizing effect in swallowing up many differences, and pulling down many bars.

4. We see why it is, that there has been so remarkable a union and fellowship among christians. It is because they are all embarked in one cause, and have one interest. They are fellow-travellers, and that which is refreshing to one, is to another. They are of one family, nay, of one body.—In the things of religion is their fellowship.—How evidently then does it appear that in order to promote christian union, they ought to converse much about the things in which they are united.

5. There is great reason to fear, that many who profess religion, are in fact, strangers to it. If religion has on all, a uniform operation, it does not look, in regard to many professors, as though they were under its power. Let me address myself particularly to such. Do you act as though you loved God supremely, and respected his law and ordinances? Do you find a disposition to live as the godly have lived, of whom we have an account? Let me urge you seriously to examine yourselves, especially as we are about to sit down at the Lord's table. Do you drink into the divine spirit? Do you come thirsting? Do you feel your hearts drawn out in devout breathings? In this way, there is free access.—Does not the subject afford a reproof to insincere, careless professors? Rouse from the slumbers of death, live a heavenly life, and drink into one spirit. Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

DISCOURSE XIII.

1 COR. XI. 28.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

WHAT naturally arises to consideration from these words, is

I. The nature of the duty inculcated, or in what respects we are to examine ourselves.

II. The importance of the duty.

I. We are to explain the nature of the duty, or in what respects we are to examine ourselves.

The duty supposes not merely that we be convinced that our views are wrong, and that we have done things that wound Christ; but that we correct our wrong views and practices. Examination implies reformation. The Apostle had been pointing out the disorders that attended the communion among the Corinthians, which rendered it for the worse and not for the better, which brought down God's judgments; for which cause, says the Apostle, "many are sick." The grand thing urged upon them, is a reformation.

As to the things about which they were to examine themselves, it was in relation to all those things which were requisite to a suitable attendance, and the enjoyment of communion with Christ.

1. One thing on which the Apostle insists, as essential to a suitable approach to the Lord's supper, is to attend it, as exhibiting the body of Christ: And one grand thing which rendered their communion for the worse and not for the better, and in which they were guilty of the body and blood of Christ, was that they were not so much actuated by the motive of having Christ exhibited, as to satisfy hunger and thirst: Which occasions the Apostle's saying, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. It concerns us therefore, in our approach, to see that the desire of having Christ exhibited, is the purpose of our mind. Let us then ask ourselves, is it not for some carnal view? Is it not because we would be thought religious? Or do we think to *merit* by coming? It is of absolute importance that we call to mind a bruised Saviour, and that our minds should be animated with love to Christ, when we behold the mysteries of divine grace celebrated.

2. It is important, when we approach the Lord's table, that in every thing, wherein we have given offence to a brother, that we should have given christian satisfaction. Not only that we should have settled matters, in which we have really given offence, or afforded just ground of dissatisfaction, but that we should have attended to all cases, wherein there is a misunderstanding: In short, it is important that we should have done every thing in our power to remove whatever might obstruct brotherly love, which is absolutely essential to communion. Our Saviour's exhotation is, "if thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." We are therefore to look into our past conduct, our public sins—our private wickedness to God.

3. As Christ promises communion to such as keep his commandments, it is important that we examine, whether we have followed Christ, and acted up to his commands. Let it be matter of serious examination, whether we have done our duty, one toward another, in admonishing. Have we caused our light to shine before others? Does our conscience tell us, that we act as being under the influence of the spirit of Christ? Is Christ and his religion honored by our lives? Do we act as though our heart was united by peculiar affection, one to another, as Christ required? Have we lived lives of self-denial? In short, have our lives been, as it were, a transcript of Christ's laws?

4. It becomes us to examine, how we live. What is the bent of our souls? What views we have from day to day? How does sin appear? What views we have of God and his law? What

exercises of submission and acquiescence in God's government? How does Christ appear in his whole character, in all the offices which he sustains? Does our heart often cry out yea, he is altogether lovely? How do Christ's laws and commands appear? Do we find a sweetness and satisfaction in obedience? How are your souls affected in the retirement of the closet? Is it a delight to your soul to be with God? And do you at such moments, as it were, forget yourselves?—What are your comforts and prospects? How does the world appear, and how is your mind influenced by invisible objects?——In short, by such enquiries as these, are we to take a thorough view of the breathings and exercises of our minds, and of the tenor of our lives. It is, in every view, important, and especially, in regard to this supper, that we be Christ's friends.—I pass now to the

II. Thing proposed, which was to consider the importance of close examination in order to come to the sacramental supper.

1. This is necessary in order to attend it agreeably to its institution, and comply with the command of Christ. There is a solemn obligation on all to attend upon it; but the obligation is complied with, only, as it is attended upon with right views. If we come while destitute of these, there is no obedience; but we add to the sin of disobedience.

2. The Apostle considers that God visited disorderly attendance with special judgments; for which cause, says he, "many among you are sick and weakly." Such a manner of communion he considers for the worse, and the guilt of it greater than that of total neglect.

3. There is no advantage in pretending to commune, while our views are wrong, and our practice such as contradicts our profession. It tends

only to harden; I mean where our views are altogether carnal.—It is important that we should examine ourselves, as an unworthy approach is eating and drinking judgment, temporal and spiritual.

4. It is important, as a due approach is an honor to Christ and our christian profession. It is a rich feast to such as come with right views. Christ has promised communion to those who come agreeably to his institution. Where the soul is filled with love to Christ, it is a sweet, blessed season. God's people have often had their cup run over. All who experience christian enjoyments, know that they are the richest mercies. To sit at Christ's feet therefore, and have the soul filled with love, and even entertained with the manifestations of Christ's dying love, is an attainment worthy of our pursuit. One would think, that the motives to preparation and examination are great.

Improvement.

1. If the institution of the supper is so solemn, and such a blessed privilege, we see how great is the obligation on all to attend upon it. The supper is designed to represent the gospel feast, and neglect of it casts practical contempt on Christ and his salvation.—You, who do not profess Christ, are sensible that those who do profess, live far short of what they ought: And some such are, perhaps, dwelling upon the sins of professors, without turning once their eyes home upon themselves. But it becomes you seriously to reflect, whether you are not despising Christ.

Some seem to suppose, that because they are are not converted, they are not under obligation, and would fain think that this can excuse them.—Others may have this as an excuse, that churches are, in their view, bad. It is true, that there is

great darkness: But it may be well to enquire, whether we do not also share in the darkness? Whether we look enough at home? Suppose that a particular church is such, that you cannot hold communion with it—this will not excuse you. Is there no church, and are there no christians with whom you may unite? This you will not pretend, unless you suppose that you are the only persons who have religion. Why do you not seek to build up the cause of Christ rather than separate yourselves and go on in the neglect of his institutions?

2. From what has been said, we may at least guess at one reason of the heavy judgments, spiritual and temporal, with which we are visited. Professors, no doubt, are in a great degree, the occasion of them: Such treatment is agreeable to God's dispensations and threatenings to his professing people. It is a day, in which Christ's laws are much neglected, and in which, there is but little appearance of brotherly love, christian discipline, or evangelical fervor in the duties of religion.

3. Let me then press examination on those of you, who hope by the leave of Providence, to celebrate the dying love of Christ. What are the daily exercises of that love, which you profess towards Christ? What is the motive of your approach to the Lord's table? Have you not reason of lamentation, that your lives have been so barren? Be intreated to reform and awake up out of spiritual slumber. The cause of Christ, your own spiritual wants, and the souls of others unitedly call upon you to use your utmost exertion in the great business of religion and your immortal salvation.

DISCOURSE XIV.

1 COR. XI. 25.

This do in remembrance of me.

THE sacramental supper was instituted at the time, when Christ and his disciples had just finished the passover; no doubt to show that the passover was designed to celebrate in type, the great work of redemption. Matthew represents, that even while they were eating the passover, Jesus took the sacramental bread, Mat. xxvi. 26. "and as they were eating, he took bread and break it." We should most naturally collect this idea were we not to compare this passage with the other Evangelists. Dr. Doddridge supposes "that there was a considerable interview with the disciples at the table; that Judas after supper went out, which occasioned some considerable discourse:—That while they sat at table, the disciples privately disputed, who should be the greatest, which occasioned our Saviour's rising from table and laying aside his garment:—That he then returned to the table, and instituted, and led his disciples to celebrate, this supper." It seems from example, that the church are to receive it as administered by Christ's Ministers. Thus the church improved the opportunity of the Apostle's being at Troas, to receive the ordinance as administered by him.

They received the bread and wine in small quantities, because they had just supped, or eaten of the passover, which they received as a meal.

The Apostle improves this as an argument with the Corinthians, that it was not the design of Christ in this institution, that they should make a meal in the holy supper. He took the cup, says Paul, when they had supped. He reproves them for their conduct in this language. "What, have ye not houses to eat and drink in? You are not to come here to receive food to satisfy hunger."

It appears that Christ, as Minister at his table, asked a blessing on the bread, or made a prayer of consecration, in which thanksgiving was an essential part, and therefore, Matthew says, "that he took bread and blessed it." Luke and others say, "when he had given thanks:" By which it seems it was a blessing in which there was special acknowledgements for the mercy.—That he also blessed the cup, and in like manner, gave thanks. Matthew expressly says, he took the cup and gave thanks. So Paul, 1 Cor. xi. says, "after the same manner he took the cup." So that it appears clear, that in the institution, our Saviour asked a blessing, both on the bread and the wine.

It seems, that before our Saviour left the guest-chamber with his disciples, they sang a hymn: Whether this is to be considered as an essential point of the sacramental exercise, may be a question. I rather conceive not. The Apostle, respecting the example of this exercise, does not mention this, though he is particular as to other things: Yet it is doubtless proper, where it can be attended to with edification.

As to the time most suitable to attend this holy institution, we should naturally suppose, as it is the most solemn act of worship performed in this lower world, that it should be on that day, which is consecrated as holy, and in commemoration of the work of redemption. The reason and fitness

of things would prove the propriety of this. The same appears from the example of the church of Troas, in fixing on this day for this solemn ordinance. It appears from this, viz. the first day of the week was the stated season. The Apostle tarried six days before this, and the people did not attend merely on account of his being there, but came together on the first day of the week, as being the stated time. I do not mean, that no circumstance can justify its being attended on another day. It was on a week day that it was instituted.

The end and design of this institution is, to represent heavenly enjoyments; to lead the minds of the people of God to a view, by faith, of spiritual enjoyments. The sacramental bread and wine were designed to represent the spiritual feast.

The union of God's people and the fellowship of the saints, is the design of this institution. So, that while God's people sit at the Lord's table as they ought, there is a kind of emblem of the fellowship of the saints in glory; and their minds are occupied with what Christ underwent for them—the greatness of his sufferings and agonies. We are apt to lose the idea of the atonement. This institution is adapted to refresh our minds with it. As we do not see Christ with our natural eyes, this is a token to remember him by. "This do in remembrance of me."

It was designed to exhibit the object of their trust and faith. Here we are invited to repose our trust:—Here we have a display of infinitely precious blood:—It is adapted to melt the heart into repentance—to excite hope, and indeed, to enkindle every grace. It is a glass in which we may see God's reconciled face. Properly improv-

ed, it is a strengthening ordinance, and was designed for this purpose.

If we have understood the nature of this holy supper, we ought to come to it under the influence of sensible relish and appetite, hungering and thirsting for spiritual food.

Brotherly love is a proper grace on this occasion, and partaking is a high act of fellowship. We pretend, in coming together, to be fellow-travellers—to have one cause, and to be united in our prospects. All difficulties therefore, ought to be settled previously.

We should come, mourning and broken-hearted for sin. Sin shuts the door against Christ. We cannot expect to meet Christ at his table, unless we endeavor to remove every thing which may offend. We should come in a believing manner. It is faith that feeds on this divine bread; that sees Christ in his glory in the breaking of bread. We should labor to mortify unbelief.

It is important, in order to come right, that we have a sense of Christ's dying love and sufferings, and therefore, we need to be much engaged in examining ourselves, and crying for strength.

The importance of attending in a proper manner, this sacramental supper, will appear from it's being a great privilege. Christ has appointed this as a place, where he will meet his followers, and he always does, if they come right. I trust that we have some of us found sacramental seasons sweet, and have met the blessed Redeemer there.

We are directed and commanded to do this in remembrance of Christ, and duly to examine, and cast out the old leaven. While we are careless and negligent, we not only rob ourselves of the good, happiness and strength which we need; but God of his honor and respect.

It is high contempt, when he has left such a pledge, when he offers such mercy at his table—to refuse to come.—What ingratitude, when he has shed his blood to redeem us, that we should despise him!

The institution is important, as it tends to cement the union between brethren, which reflects honor on religion. "Hereby," says Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

It is strengthening and quickening: It tends to enkindle our graces, and leave an abiding savour on the mind.—Indeed, we stand in great need of such a help, to strengthen us against temptation, and to enliven faith.

This subject affords a use of enquiry and examination, whether we are prepared.—Do we feel some breathings after Christ?—Some mourning for sin? Have we been endeavoring to remove idols from our own hearts?—To purge out every thing which may offend in the church?

DISCOURSE XV.

ROM. VIII. 38, 39.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

IT is a question of great importance, whether God has in his covenant promises, secured to every true saint strength to persevere in grace and

holiness unto eternal life. It is, on the one hand, a wonderful privilege and mercy, if this is the case. When the christian sees his own weakness, he will call to mind, that the Redeemer who is mighty, has undertaken to carry him through all his trials and temptations; and when he feels as though he should sink, he will rest in the divine promise, and exercise a sweet confidence in the strength of Christ, that he shall overcome. If, on the other hand, there is no promise to secure a continuance, as some seem to suppose, and it rests with and depends on the exercise of the christian's own strength, he sees no ground of hope.—He sees, every day, that he is sinking, and that without special strength, he shall never recover.—

That the perseverance of the saints depends on their own strength, is a prevailing sentiment, I find, at the present day.

Could I suggest any thing that might serve to set this subject in a clear point of light, I should be entitled to your serious attention. The Apostle, in the preceding chapter, had established the doctrine of depravity—of the impossibility of justification on the footing of the law—the doctrine of the atonement—and salvation by faith in the atonement:—He had treated on the subject of experimental religion:—He is, in my text and context, in course, treating of the abiding nature of grace.

Doctrine.—As the salvation of a believer is a work that God has undertaken, there is no created being that has power to draw a soul away from the love that is in Christ Jesus: Or, in other words, the perseverance of the saint is made certain in the covenant promises of grace. I shall, in the following discourse, attempt

I. To explain the doctrine.

II. Prove it.

III. Answer objections.

I. I am to explain the doctrine of the certainty of the saint's perseverance.

I do not mean but that christians may greatly decline, and get greatly away.

By the doctrine, is not meant, that believers will go to heaven unless they persevere in grace. Some, in their objections, treat it as though it was held, that they would be saved, let them live as they list, or whether they persevere or not. But the idea is, that God has engaged that, where grace is imparted, he will keep it alive.

I mean that there is not only an establishment that secures perseverance, but that the believer does persevere: He does not get so away, but there are some low degrees of warfare: He never gets to the state that he was in while in a state of nature.

The ground of certainty is not in the nature of grace. We see that our first parents fell from a state of perfect rectitude, and so the holy angels.

The christian may see, that his having holy exercises to day, is no security for to-morrow. There is nothing more clearly illustrated from experience, than the absolute dependence of the christian on grace:—In this light it is treated in Scripture: "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." And again—"according to the working of his mighty power."

II. I am to prove the doctrine, that the believer will, in the strength of grace, persevere to final salvation.

This doctrine of establishment in grace, grows out of the doctrine of Christ's becoming the believer's righteousness. Establishment in holiness and life was to be the fruit, or reward of obedience: So that as Christ has obeyed in our room and stead, of consequence, on the principles of

law, when the believer is united, he is established in holiness.

It is said by some, Adam fell, and why may not a believer? The difference is obvious.—In this respect, the covenant of grace is established on better promises.—

The doctrine of the certainty of saints' perseverance is, I think, clearly to be inferred from the declaration of Scripture, that the believer is justified. This justification contains in it, a title to life, and is connected with glory: "Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies."

The Scripture fully represents grace to be of an abiding nature. Where the soul is brought to be a partaker of life, it becomes an abiding principle, a well of water, springing up to eternal life. The life, of which every believer is a partaker, is said abundantly, to be eternal life. "This is life eternal to know thee, the only living and true God." "He that believeth on the Son hath life, &c."

An argument may also be drawn from our Saviour's intercessory prayer. "Keep through thine own name, those that thou hast given me. I pray not for those only, but for all those who shall believe through their word."

The doctrine may farther be argued from this, that the cause of the divine life is an immutable and everlasting cause. If the sinner's turning to God was the fruit of his own free will, then apostacy would be perfectly consistent. But the Bible, speaking of the regenerate, says, that they are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." The cause is represented as an everlasting cause. "I have loved thee," says God, "with an everlasting love." So the counsel

of God respecting the salvation of the believer, is called an immutable covenant. "That he might shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, he confirmed it by an oath."

So it is said, that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." As the cause is immutable and everlasting, so must the effect be.—Hence this work cannot fail. "His seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it on."

The same doctrine may be argued from the absolute nature of the promises of life. By absolute, I mean, that there are no conditions but what are secured by the promise. "He that believeth shall be saved. Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." These promises are absolute, in the sense that I have mentioned. No conditions are held up.—Should it be said that there is a condition understood—this is settled in Jer. xxxi. 31. in which God engages that he will write his law in their hearts, that he will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people. So in the epistle to the Hebrews, it is expressly held up, that, in this respect, it was "established on better promises."—The Apostle considers the covenant as a ground of strong consolation in the fullest manner, "confirmed by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie."

There are various passages of Scripture, which establish the doctrine of the saint's perseverance. Our text and context are full to this purpose. The Apostle asks, "who shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword." He says that they cannot. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved

us." The Apostle expresses his confidence, that the Hebrew church would not apostatize; for, says he, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." This, he supposes, would be inconsistent with God's covenant faithfulness, which he here calls "righteousness." In like manner, he expresses a strong confidence, that he, who had begun a good work in them, would complete it.—I pass now

III. To consider some objections against the doctrine.

1. It is objected, that effectual grace which should secure the perseverance of the saints, would be inconsistent with free agency. But the objection holds equally against the doctrine of special grace in conversion. If, in conversion, God effectually bows the will of an obstinate sinner, and he still acts freely, and is made willing, why should it be thought strange that God should uphold saints. This God can as easily do, consistently with the freedom of the creature that believes, as to uphold the saints and angels in glory. —The Bible declares it as a fact, that God does "work in us, both to will and to do."—And yet we know, that we are free.

2. It is objected, that this is a licentious doctrine. I presume there are not more instances of apostacy among those who believe the doctrine, than among Methodists and those who deny it.

The objection supposes religion to be something which it is not, viz. that the motive in what christians do, is self. Whereas, true christians pursue religion from delight.—The Bible considers that special, effectual grace, instead of hindering zeal, is a motive to strive, and to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for God worketh in us both to will and to do.

3. It is objected, that the Bible furnishes instances of apostacy. Judas is mentioned as one. But it is clear, that Judas never was a real subject of grace.

It is asked, do we not see many who appear to be christians, who after a while, fall away? It is true. But we do not perceive, that they fall from a state of grace. The Apostle, speaking of Hymeneus and Philetus, who apostized, says, "they went out from us, for they were not all of us."

It is further objected, that David especially, was an instance of apostacy. The Bible says, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. But David, it is said, was a murderer, and therefore fell from grace.—That David fell into the sin of murder, is not denied: But it is denied, that David was a murderer. One act, especially where it is condemned in repentance, does not constitute a character. The character must be determined from prevailing bias and pursuit. The character of Moses was that of meekness, though he was left to speak unadvisedly at the waters of Meribah.—Peter is brought as another instance of Apostacy.—But if David, Peter, and others, fell from a state of grace, as it is attempted to be proved that the christian may, from Hebrews, then it is impossible that they should have been renewed.

It is objected, that the Scripture is abundant in directions to us, to strive after salvation, and urges overcoming and enduring to the end, as necessary to salvation; which supposes their salvation doubtful. That these are necessary means and qualifications for salvation, is not doubted by those who hold to the perseverance of saints. But how does this militate against the idea, that God should effectually enable the believer thus to strive, overcome and continue?

It is objected against the doctrine of the certainty of the saint's perseverance, that it is spoken of, as hypothetical or conditional. "Except ye abide. If the righteous man turn from his righteousness: If they fall away, &c." If such expressions prove that there may, and have been cases of apostacy, then many things may be proved, which no one will admit to be true. No one will suppose that any child of Adam ever perfectly kept the commands of God. It is said, "if a man hath not eaten upon the mountains, &c. If ye are justified by law, ye are fallen from grace: If so be the dead rise not. If Christ be not risen, &c."—The use of the word, *if*, in these places, by no means supposes that there ever was, or will be such a case. The Apostle says, "if they fall away, it is impossible to renew them," but says he, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation."

Improvement.

1. If God always does carry on the work of grace which he begins in regeneration, and if any who seem to set out in religion, fall back, we have reason to think, that they never did, in fact, experience true religion. We have reason also to conclude, that many who think they have a hope, are deceived with respect to themselves. How should this excite all to close self-examination!

2. We see, that it is a great thing to be saved. None may expect to go to heaven in their sloth. It is not only a great thing to pass the new birth, but to continue in holiness. All that do, are kept by the power of God. If any feel as if they had strength in themselves, it is most likely that they never saw their own weakness.—How vain then, are the flattering hopes of sinners, that they shall, by and by, set out. Let such consider that their danger is great.

3. We see that this doctrine affords no encouragement to sloth. It is our duty to overcome, to hold out, and to keep under the body. If we take encouragement from this doctrine, to indulge in sloth, it shows what our religion is. This teaches the necessity of being much in prayer and watchfulness.

4. We see what a source of consolation there is to the godly. When you are unable to see clearly with respect to many things, and yet know, that you have taken God as your portion, you may view the inheritance secure. If there was not so divine a promise that God had engaged to carry on this work, you might and would despair.

5. We see what a wonderful scheme the gospel plan is. In it, God is all and in all. Every step teaches us to look to God, and rest in his strength. All our quickening and comfort flow from his effectual grace.

DISCOURSE XVI.

LUKE XVI. 22.

The rich man also died, and was buried.

THE parable, of which the text is a part, is a very affecting representation of the condition of the righteous and the wicked. Our Saviour draws the character of the wicked in the unmerciful and rich glutton, who wallowed in wealth and sensual pleasure.—The good man was in op-

posite worldly circumstances: He was very poor, and greatly afflicted: His body was covered with sores, and he was unable to procure a physician. It is probable that he, at last, died at the gate of the rich man, and for want of comfortable means of support. But when he died, he had got to the end of his distresses: He was now highly honored by God, though he had been low and despised in the world, and his soul was conveyed by angels to Heaven, to Abraham's bosom.

It is said in our text, that the rich man also died, and was buried. With respect to Lazarus, it is not said that he was buried; but it is most likely, that some persons were procured to throw him into a grave and bury him.

The design of the parable is, principally, to represent two things;

I. That neither riches, nor grace will secure men from death.

II. That though the saint and the sinner may seem to end this life alike; yet their state will be amazingly different in the other world.

I. The rich and poor, high and low, saint and sinner, share in death one common lot; or in other words, neither riches nor piety screen from death.

With respect to different persons, the circumstances of their death are very various. The wicked often die in great horror. Their death-bed often exhibits a scene which imagination cannot paint. The departing cries and groans of creatures are terrible. How it was with this rich man, before he died, is not said. He had a hope, that he should get to heaven; because of his descent from Abraham: But it is likely that, at his death, there was presented a very solemn scene. In his situation, such a kind of hope was but a poor affair.

It was, no doubt, much otherwise with Lazarus. As death drew near, he contemplated it, as the end of toil: As life went, glory opened; no doubt, in a pleasing manner.

There was probably a wide difference, as to the manner of their being buried. The funeral of the rich man was probably attended with great pomp and parade, as is customary with the rich and grand. But all this afforded him no pleasure: His soul was, at this time, groaning in horror.

Lazarus was buried, if at all, in a very different manner. As he was, while alive, destitute of friends, who were able, or disposed to help him; so now it is likely, that there were none to drop a tear, or pay respect to his remains. The rich man, though unwilling to feed him while alive, might now, probably, give a trifle to have his body put under ground, as the sight of it could not fail to awaken in him some remorse.—But however this may have been, we are told, that the rich man also died, and they now lay on a level.

Here the question may arise, why even good men are not exempted from death? The answer may be returned in the following manner. These bodies are not fit for heaven, and cannot inherit that holy place. It is therefore, a privilege to be unclothed. To the righteous, death is entirely disarmed. To those who are in the exercise of a lively faith, death is not terrible. It is true, that Enoch and Elijah were translated; but they, no doubt, in order to go to heaven, suffered a change, similar to that which saints will undergo, in dying. Such bodies as we possess, are not fit for heaven: They must be sown, in order to a spiritual body. So that on the whole, as death is the way which infinite wisdom has chosen, to change these corruptible bodies, it is a privilege to the righteous; especially, as the change is not to take place, till

the day of judgment. In death the soul is taken home to rest, and gets beyond toils and conflicts.

Further, death is wisely ordered, as the means of quickening God's people. A view of approaching death is a solemn admonition: And not being thus exposed to death would take off the force of many threatening providences. President Edwards seems to consider that the shortening of men's lives, since the flood, is a merciful dispensation, calculated to awaken their attention to religion.——Indeed, it would probably have been of evil tendency, to have delivered men from all the curses denounced on Adam: They have need to share in the fruits of sin, to rouse them to consideration, to lead them to a sense of the evil from which they are delivered, and to a conviction of the excellency and importance of grace.

But let this be as it may, all must die. There is no distinction between rich and poor, good and bad. The Scripture fully asserts the universal mortality of mankind. "It is appointed unto men once to die." It is said, "the living know that they must die." The same truth is illustrated by abundant facts. We see that the rich, as well as the poor, have bowed to death. All the godly, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the prophets and eminent saints have died. Neither piety, nor any other circumstance has proved an exemption. Lazarus, the beggar, must die, and the rich man also died.—But

II. Though the righteous die, as well as the wicked; yet death lands them in different states: Though their bodies alike crumble in the dust; their state is very different beyond death.

Here we may notice the contrast between the righteous and the wicked.—The soul of the poor despised beggar was convoyed by a host of angels to the heavenly paradise, to the sight and presence

of Christ, and was admitted to a full view of divine glory. But the rich man, instead of a convoy of angels, had a convoy of devils, and immediately found himself in horror and anguish.—He had lived in sinful indulgence; but he has now got beyond all kind of good. There was not one comfortable circumstance in his then state or prospect. A drop of water was denied him; he was refused the least possible relief, and even deprived of all hope. His former life came up in remembrance, and his guilt, with a pressing sense of wrath. His conscience gnawed, and he felt as though sinners could not live, as he had done, if they could only know what he experienced.

But the poor man had got beyond all his pains. He no longer sheds a tear, but enjoys perfect peace. His enjoyments are equal to the extent of his capacity. No intervening cloud, no perplexing doubt, or conflict interrupts his peace; but his happiness is complete.—

The state of the rich man is directly the reverse. His misery is complete, and were his capacity a thousand times greater, it would still be full. No imagination can paint his dreadful situation.—Instead of experiencing pleasure from the presence of God, he experiences directly the reverse. The presence of God, to the rich man is Hell. The more he sees of God, the greater is his torment.—

The presence of God is heaven to the godly: The clear shining of divine perfection ravishes their souls. But these things torment the wicked. They wish there was no God.

As to their hope, also, there was a great difference. Lazarus had his hope completely satisfied; but the rich man experienced a dreadful disappointment. He little thought of such language, as he was now called to hear from father Abraham.

There was a great difference as to their companions. Lazarus went to a perfectly holy society, Abraham and all the prophets, where all was peace and love. But the rich man found himself a companion of devils, where all was discord and horror.

As to their employments, Lazarus and all the godly were delightfully employed in praising God; But the rich man was occupied, in company with wicked spirits, in venting reproaches and blasphemies.

Improvement.

1. The conduct of impenitent sinners is, in many respects, surprizing. It is surprizing that they should run such risks of losing their peace, of missing so great good, and of experiencing such a state of misery. With many, the horrors of a death-bed have more than weighed down all the pleasures of sense, for which sinners sell their souls.—That they should believe in an eternity of misery, as the fruit of impenitence, and yet neglect religion, is very surprizing. There are many persons of this description, who pay no attention to this all-important subject, who neglect all means, who do not read, or attend the administration of God's word, who yet are ready to own, that if they should die in this state, they must utterly perish: Still they live, from day to day, and from year to year, flattering themselves in a sinful course.—Such conduct displays the worst kind of infatuation. It would seem as if bold sinners were trying to provoke God, and were determined to brave his wrath.

2. If sinners had a real sense of their future horror and torment, it would spoil all their mirth and levity. It would present before them, a solemn scene. Indeed, we should have little else among them, but screeches and groans. When

the rich man came to realize the threatnings of God, it seemed to him, that if one were to go from the eternal world, and tell sinners what he was suffering in hell, that they could not go on in their sins.

Be exhorted then, O sinners, to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let the peace of your souls be your first care. What good will your treasures do you, in the hour of death!

DISCOURSE XVII.

EPH. II. 19.

Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

THERE are few things of more importance than a clear knowledge of the character and privileges of a citizen of Zion, or the heavenly Jerusalem. This is necessary for us, in order to determine how it is with us, what is our state and character, and what are our prospects.

The Apostle in the preceding part of this chapter, is drawing the character of men in a state of nature; as dead in trespasses and sins; by nature children of wrath; without Christ; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; strangers from the covenants of promise; having no hope and without God in the world.——He then describes their happy change of state—that now they were made nigh by the blood of Christ; that Christ by his

death had reconciled them to God; that they had been brought into a happy nearness to him, and that, through Christ, by one spirit, they had access to God. In this connexion come in the words of the text: "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers, &c."

In speaking from these words, I shall

I. Attend to the character of a citizen of Zion.

II. To his privileges.

I. I shall attend to the character of a citizen of Zion.

The citizens of Zion were once citizens of the world: Here all their interest was; but they are translated out of it. "They are not of this world," says Christ, "for I have chosen them out of the world." They are pilgrims and strangers. Their interest is not here, and they are disposed to improve this world, only as an accommodation for their journey.

All the citizens of the New-Jerusalem from this world are new; they cannot see how any can enter into the kingdom of God, except they are born again. Things appear to them altogether different from what they once did. They have a totally different view of the character of God and his law.

A citizen of Zion has placed his interest in Heaven: He has sold, as it were, in this world: He is like a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls.

All those who are citizens have a supreme love to God, the King of Zion: They are charmed with his character, and it is to them altogether lovely.——The citizens of this world do not like all that belongs to the King of Zion: They are opposed to his pure and holy character, his laws and his providence. But it is otherwise with those who belong to the New-Jerusalem. They love in God, what others hate; his purity, holiness

and sovereignty, his government, laws and holy severity: They do not dislike God, because he is obliged to damn the impenitent sinner. Indeed, they see a divine beauty in the character of God; and the law, as a ministration of death and condemnation, is to them glorious. Nay, they see a peculiar beauty in the system of law, and in the truths contained in the Bible. Whereas, those who are of an opposite character, are not reconciled to the system contained in the Bible: They see no divine beauty in it; but raise many difficulties, and make many cavils in opposition to it.

Further, those who are citizens, are, in some degree, conformed to that heavenly country. It is calculated to suit their taste: They are suited with the employments and with the society of the country: They, in some measure, talk the language of the heavenly Canaan.—Among themselves also, there is a great likeness: They are engaged in the same pursuit; have one common interest; belong to one family; drink into one spirit; have one faith; one Lord; one baptism; they are all travelling the same way, and the same kind of love is characteristic of them. There is a sort of love, or affection, which strangers and others may have to God, the King of Zion; but it is all interested. But the love which is possessed by the citizens of Zion, is of a different nature: They love God for his holiness, and for what he is in himself.

There is something peculiar in their hatred of sin: They loath themselves, as sinners, and love God, because he is opposed to their character. They have in this world a peculiar warfare with sin.—They have a peculiar kind of submission to the Divine will, and exercise patience under the severest trials. The will of their Heavenly Father is to them of more importance than life.

They have often a pleasure in suffering the will of God: They can even glory in tribulation, and rejoice that they are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ: They can, in relation to threatened evils, say, good is the word of the Lord: If their Heavenly Father allots straits and trials, they can cheerfully endure them.

They see a kind of beauty, glory and lustre in divine things, which others do not see; they have a kind of joy and peace, with which the stranger does not intermeddle. When they are born into the kingdom of God, they discover in the visible creation, a divine glory which they never saw before: They have peace in believing, and are transported with those divine truths contained in the word of God.

The natural man discerneth not the things of the spirit of God, but the citizens of Zion place their highest enjoyments in things that are wholly spiritual. These objects swallow up their minds: About these, when they live like citizens, they like to converse, and after these they long. Strangers often wonder what there is in these things, that can so much delight them, and are often ready to suppose, that there is little difference between themselves and the godly. But however little apparent distinction there may be, yet they are travelling very different ways. They have a very different kind of faith and trust. The citizens of Zion have a confidence in God, which, in the darkest times, bears up the soul. They willingly submit to self-denial, and can readily consent to forsake the pleasures of sin. We see all this exemplified in Abraham, Moses and others of the godly.

I now pass to the

II. Thing, which was to mention some of the privileges of citizens of Zion.

They are entitled to great external privileges; such as important visible relation to Christ, brotherly watch, and fellowship, and admission to visible nearness to Christ, in the holy, sacramental supper. These, if properly improved, are great advantages.—They experience the great and blessed grace of pardon, in which God, as it were, opens his arms to receive them, and their souls are unburthened of guilt.

Another great privilege of citizens of Zion is, that they are adopted into Christ's family, are dignified by the appellation of sons of God, and by the gift of the spirit of adoption.

Another privilege is the peculiar intimacy to which God has admitted his people. He has been wont to let his servants know all that he was about to do. Thus he communicated to Abraham his design respecting the destruction of Sodom, and to Noah his design respecting the deluge.

The privileges of the godly under the christian dispensation, appear in that near and intimate communion to which God often admits them. "Our fellowship," says the Apostle, "is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ." It is astonishing condescension that God should, in such a sweet manner, lift upon his people the light of his countenance.—He not only makes them heirs of glory; but gives them in the present world, many sweet pledges, earnests and prelibations of their future glorious inheritance. Great and amazing is that happiness to which they are sometimes admitted. They experience the dawning of glory in their souls, and are swallowed up in delights that are unspeakable.

Lastly, the privileges of the citizens of Zion will be rendered still more complete after death. They shall then enter on complete and endless fe-

liety. Great honors shall be conferred upon them in being made kings and priests unto God, and they shall be rendered infinitely rich in being made joint-heirs with Christ. They shall have a seat at Christ's right, and be themselves seated on thrones of judgment. They shall join the glorious society of heaven, have all their corruptions done away, be near Christ, enjoy the beatific vision, have all doubts dispelled; every cloud removed, and swim in rivers of pleasure.

Improvement.

It is a great thing to be a citizen of Zion and an heir to such astonishing glory and bliss. It is great in every view; as to privileges, as to change of temper and change of state.—It is to be feared that many consider themselves as citizens of Zion, who have no just claim to this character. But it is a dangerous thing to be deceived respecting our state, and we have need to look well to it, that we are not.

We see also the folly of sinners in neglecting religion when they have the offer of such a prize and such privileges.—

Be exhorted then to work out your salvation. Behold now is the accepted time: Behold now is the day of salvation.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

EXOD. XX. 12.

Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

THE all-wise God has established a beautiful subordination amongst men; not founded on positive institutions, but resulting from their different relations and circumstances, and absolutely necessary to the harmony and well-being of society. The doctrine of liberty and equality, if designed to abolish these distinctions, which are pointed out in the word of God, and are dictated by the great law of benevolence, is destructive to society, and subversive of the fundamental principles of religion and morality. But if the meaning is, that a system of law and government ought to consult and respect equally the interest and good of every class of men, the doctrine is just, and founded in reason.

It is important that we attain to a proper understanding of the extent, nature and important reasons of the command recited in the text.—It is my design

I. To explain the command.

II. Suggest some considerations to enforce it.

I. I am to explain the command.—In the prosecution of this design, I shall enquire

(I.) Who are to be understood by father and mother?

(II.) How we are to honor them?

(I.) I enquire, who are to be understood by father and mother? I fully acquiesce in the answer to this question given by the assembly of divines, viz. that by father and mother in the fifth command, are meant not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; especially, such as by God's ordinance, are placed over us in authority, in family, church, or commonwealth. So that father and mother respect the regulations and subordinations amongst men, arising from different circumstances. It will not be necessary to show, that natural parents are, in Scripture, styled father and mother. The aged are often styled fathers. "Our fathers, where are they? Since the fathers have fallen on sleep.—Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father.—The elder women as mothers, &c."—It is necessary in order to harmony in society, that there should be subordination among the members. The same should take place in a family, according to age.——Men of eminence and gifts in the church, are also styled fathers. Thus Elisha says to Elijah, "my father, my father," and king Joash uses the same expressions to Elisha. Rulers are in Scripture, styled "fathers." Thus Naaman is styled father by his servants and subjects. Thus it is said, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers." So that this command requires suitable honors and respect to superiors.

(II.) I enquire how this duty is to be performed, or how we are to honor father and mother?—Here I would consider the respect and honor due to different superiors.

(1.) Natural parents are to be honored by a cheerful obedience to all lawful commands. I say lawful: For we must obey God rather than man. We may obey no creature in that which, according to the divine law, is wrong, and in those things

which we may view as wrong, or unreasonable, we ought, as children, with modesty and due respect, to excuse ourselves. It is the duty of children, while in a state of minority, to be faithful and devoted to the interest of their parents, and it becomes them, after they are, by law, of age, ever to treat their parents with respect. It is their duty also, to honor them by contributing to their support and comfort. Children, when it is in their power, ought never to see their parents suffer through indigence. The Apostle, speaking of widows who are objects of charity, says, if they have children, or nephews, let them learn to show piety at home, and requite their parents.

Children ought to honor their parents by such suitable language and behavior, as custom has established; as, for instance, the addition of Sir, is often proper as a mark of respect, in reply to a superior. Children are not to delay, when a parent speaks, and are to reply in such a manner as custom has instituted; rising up; uncovering the head as a mark of respect, and giving parents the most honorable seat and place. The command is, "thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man."

It is dishonorable in children to take the lead in conversation, when their parents are present, or to speak without being spoken to, unless by way of question, or request, or when invited to use freedom. These are some of the ways in which parents are to be honored.

(2.) I shall consider how superiors in age are to be honored. There ought to be different degrees of subordination. Other things being equal, respect is to be had to superior age. It is beautiful and according to the dictates of religion, that children in a family, should yield the first rank to the oldest of their number, and so maintain such

a subordination from the highest to the lowest. The same thing ought to take place in other societies. Destroy subordination, and you destroy the springs of society, and introduce general discord. As the subordination is great between children and the aged, so the former ought to use all instituted marks of honor and respect to them, in language and behavior.

It is, in my view, one sad token, at the present day, of disrespect to divine institutions, that proper distinction and subordination between children and youth, and the aged, are no longer observed. Children are bold, saucy, and impudent. They enter the houses of their superiors, without any mark of respect. All modesty of behavior is laid aside.—But the express command of Jehovah is, "thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man."

I must pass over many relations in which respect and honor are due, as of servants to masters, wives to husbands.—So also, I must omit saying any thing with relation to the respect due to those whom God has honored with leading gifts in his church, and observe,

(3.) That rulers, especially those in high rank in government, are to be honored as civil fathers. This is most reasonable and enforced by moral considerations. There is nothing more evident than that the great God has enjoined it on us to pay suitable respect to rulers, and has for the good of society, instituted subordination in this respect. We are to honor them by cheerfully paying tribute for their support. "For which cause," says the Apostle, "pay ye the tribute, for they are Gods ministers, honor to whom honor, fear to whom fear, tribute to whom tribute." Our Saviour himself wrought a miracle to pay tribute to the heathen rulers.—We are not only to pay

tribute to rulers, but to submit to their authority. "Be subject," says the Apostle, "to the higher powers; for the powers that be are ordained of God. The Jews were ready to question their obligation to submit to the Roman laws and government: But our Saviour very clearly inculcated the duty of submission. The Apostle also exhorts christians, since they were providentially subject to the authority of the Romans, cheerfully to submit to their rulers, not only for wrath but for conscience sake: For, says he, they are God's ministers: Christians are under obligation to submit to rulers, not only under a good constitution, but even where it is not the best. The Roman government was extremely arbitrary under the emperors, as all know, who have been acquainted with their history; yet, as the power they exercised was, in a sense, delegated to them, the primitive christians were under solemn obligations to submit. Accordingly, the Apostle says, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive damnation. We are under obligation to submit, not only to good rulers, but to infidels, if providentially in the place of government; such, as it appears, were the rulers in the days of Christ and his apostles. We are, at all times, under solemn obligations to submit to constitutional authority.—It was wrong in the Jews to choose a king, and God remonstrated against it. But when they had delegated authority, the divine command was binding on them, "fear God and honor the king."

I proceed

II. To enforce obedience to the fifth command.—The duty enjoined in it is not only enforced by positive injunction, but is of a moral nature, and is placed among moral precepts acknowledged to

be of the highest importance. It is often inculcated in the Scriptures. "Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise." It is enforced by abundant Scriptural examples. We may notice the honor which Solomon paid to his mother, in seating her at his right hand. We may notice also, the example of the Redeemer, which is of the highest importance. He, though Lord of all, honored his parents by being subject to their authority, and when in the bitter agonies of death, remembered his mother, recommending her to the care of the beloved disciple.—He never stirred up complaints against government, but inculcated submission: And when the Jews came to entangle him respecting tribute, he prudently let them know, that they ought quietly to submit.

In like manner, the Apostles and primitive christians were no troublers of state. When the Jews rose in opposition to the Roman government, they avoided entering into their plans of insurrection, and enjoined it as a duty, to submit not only for wrath but for conscience sake.—I would not, by what has been said, be understood however to mean, that it may never, in any instance, be right to seek redress of oppressive and unconstitutional measures in a constitutional way.

Further, such subordination as I have described, when existing in families, towns and larger societies, is exceedingly beautiful. It tends to peace and happiness: And indeed, has some resemblance to the harmony of heaven.

Disobedience to parents, and reviling are strictly forbidden in the word of God. A disobedient child was to be put to death among the Jews: But on the contrary, obedience appears to have ensured the divine blessing. The command in the text is connected with a gracious promise, "that thy

days may be long upon the land which thy God giveth thee," and doubtless, spiritual mercies were prefigured under the shadow of temporal blessings.

Improvement.

1. We see that strict family government is a matter of great importance in a religious, as well as civil view. It is necessary to establish proper subordination, in order to a religious education. Indeed, the peace and good order of society have their foundation, greatly, in family-government and subordination.—You who are parents, have a good opportunity, while your children are young, to render unto them important service in their education. Forming them to such manners and respectful conduct, as have been described, will fit them to be useful and respectable in the world, blessings to parents and to society.

2. We see that the neglect of the duties enjoined in this command, is one of the crying sins of the present age, and exposes our land to the judgments of God. Let me press upon you obedience to the command. Be exhorted to submit yourselves, one to another. We all owe subordination: This is a duty which we owe to God and to one another.

There exists a great and growing evil, in the disrespectful conduct and language of children and youth towards superiors; which is inconsistent not only with the dictates of religion, but with proper refinement of manners.—Let me then urge the duty in a religious view. Compliance with it has a promise that implies important good. There are great evils threatened to disobedience. If therefore, you regard your temporal, or spiritual good, attend to this moral duty. There are important spiritual fruits which will result from the

faithful discharge of it, and which powerfully recommend and enforce it.

In a worldly view it will redound to your honor and interest, and in a spiritual view, to your eternal benefit. I call upon you to take a view of your past conduct in every respect, and to enquire with yourselves, whether it is not high time to form new resolutions. You that are parents, and are convinced that you have not been faithful in inculcating this duty in your families, now set about it in serious earnest. Let children take up a resolution to reform their conduct, and may God by his spirit, assist in the discharge of this and every duty.

DISCOURSE XIX.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

IN a late discourse, I attended to the duty of a child to a parent. The words of the text lead us to consider the duty of a parent to a child. Tho' the duty of a child does not altogether result from the parent's doing his duty; yet it may be said greatly to depend on it.

The charge of the head of a family is most important and solemn, both as it respects the present and future world. The result of the education of children is, at least in general, the formation of a character which extends through life. There are many important things which encourage the duty, as it respects the child, as it respects the parent,

and as it respects society at large. The text is a proverb: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The wise man, no doubt, meant that education would have great influence in forming the character. The words hold up a connexion of some kind between training children up right, and their doing right, or continuing in that way in which they are brought up.

Some suppose, that the training up, means in the exercise of faith, and in compliance with the covenant, and is connected with a promise of grace to the child to secure his obedience: That the connexion is in a religious view certain; that is, if parents, in the exercise of faith, discharge their duty in training up children, that the promise is sure and will be fulfilled with respect to children.—Others suppose that the text is not to be understood, as holding up so certain a connexion; but that the meaning is that children, generally speaking, will walk in the path in which they have been educated: That if they are trained up to be externally conformed to moral and religious duties and principles, they will continue in them: But if, on the contrary, they receive a bad education, they will probably retain the influence of it through life.—It is not my present purpose to urge considerations in favor of either sentiment, exclusively. The words of the text do, at least, contain this truth, that faithful endeavors in educating children, have a powerful influence in forming and fixing their character for life.

In the ensuing discourse, I shall

I. Consider what is implied in the duty.

II. The benefits of it.

I. I shall consider what is implied in training up a child in the right way.

The duty ought to be early engaged in. The first impressions and principles ought to be of the right kind.—

1. Parents ought to be careful about doing themselves, or countenancing in children, that which is wrong, even in the early stages of life. Parents, it is to be feared, often do that which is not strictly just themselves; which leads children to think, that it *is just*, and emboldens them in doing the same. Parents may encourage their children in making encroachments and trespasses on their neighbor's property: They may, when any lost thing is found, instead of seeking an owner, rather secrete it, and be guilty of misrepresentations in deal. Children watch every such step of their parents, and will be apt to imitate them. We have need, therefore, to see to it that we do right ourselves, if we mean to train up children in right ways. We must be strictly just, sober, chaste, established in the truth, attend religious worship, liberal, and always ready to impart to charitable purposes. Example will, in this way, have a most powerful influence.

2. Parents are to attend to all rational methods of restraint. I allow that if government and restraint can be maintained without the rod, it is highly expedient. It would be happy, if children would hearken to counsel, or commands, so as to refrain from improper conduct. Some children indeed, do so in such a degree, as to render the rod unnecessary; which has led some to conclude, that it is never necessary in any case. But this is undoubtedly a mistake. The Scripture fully confirms the necessity of it. Solomon observes, "he that spareth his rod, hateth his son." When it is necessary, we are in no wise to neglect it. At the same time, great wisdom is to be used respecting age, circumstances, &c. Many find the task

of government more difficult, from not beginning early. It is necessary to establish authority early over children, and if the parent loses or neglects to maintain his authority, all as to government is lost.

3. We ought early and carefully to watch against vicious habits, and labour to cultivate good ones.

Vicious propensities begin to appear in infancy. Some are prone to the indulgence of passion; some to falshood; some to injustice and fraud; some to bad language; and others to obstinacy and disobedience. But we ought to begin early to counteract this vicious propensity of our nature, which will unavoidably manifest itself in children, if not restrained in season.

There is, no doubt, naturally an original difference in men, yet the distinctions which we see, are owing greatly to education. The mind is, no doubt, capable of being greatly improved, and there are natural principles capable of being highly cultivated. There are natural ties of affection in children toward parents, and in parents toward children: So also, with respect to other relations. All these are capable of being improved.

There is also, a humane compassionate principle, implanted for important ends, which may be improved to purposes of liberality and charity. The taste of children for natural beauty, may be so managed as to be converted into a love of propriety of conduct. There is also in children, a natural kind of modesty and deference to superiors, which ought to be cultivated.

But it is not sufficient that we cultivate natural principles, it is necessary that great pains be taken to lead children to reverence God and his institutions; that we labor to beget in them an awe of him, so that they shall fear to offend him. It

would be well for parents early to instil into the minds of children, a reverence for truth, strict integrity, chastity and temperance: They should be early taught to possess tender feelings towards their fellow creatures, and to perform acts of tenderness to the distressed.

It is the duty of parents to inculcate on their children liberality to the needy, and to enable them, even when young, to do something towards promoting the interests of society, or any public design. It is a mean, dishonest spirit, to desire to enjoy the privileges of society, at the expense of others, or that men should in any way, serve them, and they be unwilling to reward them for it. Parents ought, in training up children, to expose a mean, niggardly spirit.

Children should also be taught to abhor fraud and injustice, and to regard the property of others as sacred. The means of enforcing and impressing these things on the minds of children, will be various, according to age and disposition. With some, it will have great influence to expose the evil tendency of vice, and display before them, the benefits attending virtue. When children are of proper age, amusing books should be put into their hands, which point out minutely the unhappy consequences of different vices and the happy fruits of the opposite virtues; which leads me to observe,

4. That it is of great importance, as it respects a plan of family education, that children be instructed in the first principles of science. This will enlarge their minds and prepare them for the enjoyment of other helps. If children are not taught to read, they cannot profit by the useful books which may be put into their hands. Learning children to read, gives great advantage in their education in the principles of virtue and religion.

It is almost unnecessary for me to add, that unless children are taught to write, they must, of course, be forever incapable of being very useful in society.

It is a great unhappiness that in many families there should be such neglect in giving children a common education. Some may, in a degree, be hindered through poverty.——It may be a question, whether there ought not to be more attention paid to the establishment of schools, which may afford relief in this respect to poor families? It is a public evil, that the children of such poor families should be strolling about the streets, idling away their time, and learning vice.

5. In the education of children it is important, early to instil into their minds religious sentiments. We ought to begin, almost as soon as children can speak, to teach them the existence of God, his greatness, omnipresence, and government, the law of God with its moral precepts, promises and threatnings, the fall and present state of man, and the great doctrines of the gospel in general: It is a duty not merely to tell children that these things are so, but, as their minds are capable of it, to show them the reasons of them, and hold up the evidence of revealed religion, so as to beget in their minds a full establishment of the great truths of religion.—Those who are thus well instructed, will not be easily shaken in their religious belief, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

I am sensible that there are many, who are opposed to the idea, that children should be instructed in religion. But, in my view, it is to but little purpose, that we attempt to restrain and regulate children, without the aid of christianity.

Instilling into their tender minds a belief of the existence of a God, a Holy Being, who has a view

of all our conduct; of a future state, and the way of life through Christ, will have the effect to produce a powerful restraint. This agrees with what we find in Scripture. God told Abraham what he was about to do to Sodom, to enable him, with better advantage, to train up his family.——Independently of those effects, is it of no consequence to children, to be acquainted with religion, as being themselves candidates for future and immortal happiness? Let parents then early inculcate on children, religious and moral duties, as sanctioned by the authority of the great God: Let them teach them a regard to religious institutions, the Sabbath and seasons of worship, training them up punctually to attend public worship and gospel instruction. As many who are heads of families, are not wholly competent to establish all the great doctrines of religion; so it is important to improve able and faithful gospel instructions and to see that children attend upon them.

It will one day appear a serious affair, that so many children are neglected at home, and not taken to places of instruction! How will those answer for it who let their families stay at home on the Sabbath, seldom, if ever, attending any religious instruction! How many are there, who, perhaps, never hear a sermon, or prayer, and through their whole lives have little or nothing said to them on the subject of religion!

6. In order more effectually to accomplish the before described ends, early establish authority over them, and impress on them, sentiments of subordination. It is much easier at first to instil just sentiments in this respect, and form children to right conduct, than afterwards to eradicate bad sentiments, and altar bad conduct. To subject the minds of children to authority, and establish proper subordination is not difficult at first. Their

wills, though made stubborn by indulgence, are, like growing twigs, easily bent when young and tender.

The scriptures have established principles of subordination. Children are to be trained up to treat with respect and suitable manners, superiors in age and office. It is a detestable sight for children to be indulged in treating aged, or leading public characters with disrespect. It is altogether subversive of proper order in society.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I will add, that we are not barely to teach children truth in a general view, but are to make solemn application of it to their consciences, and endeavour to awaken their attention to the concerns of their own souls. For this end, we should bring into view their characters, and lost state, and warn them of their misery and danger while continuing in sin. We should improve the judgements of God for their instruction; we have need in our conversation with them, to dwell much on the subject of their souls' concern.

7. As it is a great work, we have need to be much in prayer to God, not only for strength to do our duty, but that he would sanctify the means; and conscious that all which we can do, will be ineffectual without the blessing of God, we are on our bended knees daily to dedicate and resign them up to God.

I proceeed,

II. To consider the importance of good government and education in a family. The character of a child through life, as has been already remarked, greatly depends on his early education. Those habits which are formed when persons are young, are generally the most abiding. So that all the important consequences of a regular life are motives to induce parents to train up their

children in the way they should go.——Children whose characters are formed by a good education are generally prospered: They are respectable and share in the esteem and confidence of mankind. They are rendered blessings to their parents, and treat them generally with respect and tenderness. Besides, the highest satisfaction which parents can have in their children, is to see them do well. Indeed, it is one of the greatest temporal comforts which parents can enjoy. Since education has such powerful influence on character, it is important, as it respects society. Those who have been rightly educated, as children, make peaceable members of society: They lead regular, obedient lives, and are always ready to aid and support beneficial institutions.——Such persons constitute the very strength of society: They are not apt to disturb the peace, trample on the laws, and keep society in a tumult.

The advantages are great, not only in a temporal, but in a religious view. To parents who have faithfully discharged their duty in this respect, it will be matter of comfortable reflection, here and hereafter. They have great reason to hope that the pains they have taken, may prove the means of their children's salvation. There are, at least, great encouragements, if not promises, which faith may lay hold of. If we are faithful, we do much here to promote the honor and cause of God.

The consequences of neglect are often very unhappy. They are unhappy, as they respect the honour of God and religion. If children are not restrained, and vicious habits guarded against, they will be exposed to every kind of vice, to profaneness, irreligion, fraud, intemperance, &c.—To be satisfied of this, let us only look around and view the state of families. If parents are pro-

fane, it is common to find their children so: If parents do not attend Christian worship, nor pray in their families; if they are dishonest in deal, and are prone to over-reach and defraud, their children resemble them in these respects. For parents to educate their children in this way, is to train them up to dishonor God, to disregard the dictates of religion, and to go swiftly on in the way to destruction.

The consequences of neglect are evil, as they respect parents. Parents, if they have any feelings, must be grieved at seeing the wicked conduct of their children, who often run into sins that expose them to shame, such as theft, robbery and murder. These crimes are commonly a consequence of neglect on the part of parents; which neglect is repaid in the pain, ignominy and reproach which attend children.

Neglect is a great evil to parents, as children, if not properly trained up, will, in their turn, treat parents with disobedience and disrespect. They will be unfeeling and negligent with respect to the wants of parents; and prove heavy curses, instead of blessings to them. But the most dreadful evil will be exhibited in the future world; when unfaithful parents will hear the cries and reproaches of children, and see and realize that their children have perished through their neglect.

Improvement.

1. We see what a solemn charge parents have. If it were not for surprizing stupidity, they would be ready to sink under the weight of it. God has put those who are parents in a situation to do much good for their children. He has given them at least encouragement, that they may be instrumental of their immortal salvation. It is a great work to form the young mind to virtue and religion, and the consequences of neglect are dreadful.

2. The judgment-day will be a solemn day to unfaithful parents. There are, perhaps, many parents here in this town, who, by their negligence and wicked examples, have been leading their children to hell. What have many of you done towards training up your children for a world of blessedness? Your own consciences must answer, that you have rather been training them up for a world of misery. At the day of judgment, it will be found that the blood of souls is in your skirts. Do you realize it, that you must meet your children at the bar of Christ, and answer for your neglect of their education! How will you endure the cries and reproaches of your children? Let all such, as indulge their children in walking in the way of their hearts, lay these things seriously to heart.

3. If so much depends on the faithful discharge of parental duty, then children have need to see how they improve by the instructions of parents. You, who are children, will have a solemn account to give, if, after having had faithful parents, you have yet disregarded their warnings. Such abuse of privileges will be weights to sink you lower in hell.

4. It is a matter of great importance in every view, that men should live moral and religious lives. Their own security depends on a religious life: It is that without which they cannot be saved. But those who indulge themselves in sinful courses, are not only going to destruction themselves, but are leading their families with them.

5. Be exhorted then, you who are heads of families, to exert yourselves and be faithful. This is a day in which there is a great decay of family religion and government; the evils of which are visible and alarming. Remember, that if you are of the number who are guilty of neglect, it will

end in your sorrow. You are destroying your children, and you may finally be convinced of it, when, alas! it may be too late to remedy the evil. Let me now therefore, persuade and exhort you to reform your conduct. The call is loud to you, *now* to set about this important duty, and to train up your children in the way they should go, that when they are old, they may not depart from it.

DISCOURSE XX.

GEN. XVIII. 19.

For I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.

IN these words are contained a number of important and interesting particulars respecting the covenant of grace and mercy, which God made with Abraham. We are taught the duration and extent of the covenant, and the nature of the good promised in it; and especially are we told, what are the privileges to the infant seed of the faithful.

Some consider the covenant a mere empty affair, as it respects the infant seed of God's people. That the covenant in this respect, is set aside; that the infant seed of God's people stand in no more relation to God and the covenant than the seed of heathens. Others suppose, that the covenant is of the same extent, as to duration, in respect to the seed of the faithful, as to the faithful themselves; that there are not merely great en-

couragements, but precious promises to the faithful, and those who comply respecting their seed. What is the real truth respecting this subject, is a question worthy of serious attention. The words of my text are the words of God concerning Abraham. We have an account in the preceding chapter, of God's delivering his covenant to him, which is in these words, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee;" and directed the same eternal badge, viz. circumcision on himself and children, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and used as a sign of the circumcision of the heart. The covenant, thus delivered, wanted explanation to Abraham, how and on what condition God would be a God to his seed, and in what way this would be accomplished. This God does in the next chapter, which contains my text. God was about to destroy Sodom by a special judgment and manifestation of displeasure for sin. God says, "shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do, seeing he shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed?" These words seem, in a prophetic sense, to intimate that Abraham should not only be federal head in relation to the covenant which respected his natural seed, but also other nations. God proposes to reveal this special providence as a mean, by which Abraham might train up his family in the fear of the Lord: For, says God, "I know him that he will command his children, &c." There are several things contained in these words:

1. That a person may so believe and comply with the covenant, that his obedience and faithfulness shall be secured as really, in respect to his child, as himself, and hence "I know him, &c." that is, the matter by the covenant was made certain that Abraham would comply.

2. The words contain a plain promise that the obedience of the child, or his keeping the way of the Lord, should be the fruit of the faithful discharge of duty, as it respects the child. The child can be said to keep the way of the Lord only in the exercise of that real holiness, with which salvation is connected.

3. It appears that the promise did not barely respect natural seed, but household subjects; as for instance, servants as well as others. This was the way God was to bring on Abraham the thing he had spoken; evidently referring to the promise that God would be a God to his seed, and so explains the reason of the appointment, that the seed of God's people should have his mark set on them, and be the subjects of the administration of the covenant.

The doctrine which I shall attempt to establish is this: That God has absolutely promised to the faithful, believing parent, in the covenant which he made with Abraham, that obedience in the child which is connected with its salvation.

I. I shall enquire into the duration of the covenant, or whether it was to be a perpetual covenant?

II. What is required in the covenant, of the professing parent, or head of the family, as it respects his household?

III. Prove the doctrine, that God has promised to the believing, faithful parent, saving mercy for his household, as a condition of promise.

IV. Attend to a number of questions, that may arise on this subject.

I. I shall enquire into the duration of the covenant, or whether it was to be perpetual?

It seems to be held by some, that this was only a temporary, shadowy covenant, that had respect only to outward blessings, to which the Jews were entitled only as Abraham's natural seed. But if

faith was not necessary to partake of the blessings of the covenant, I do not see how they could be excluded for unbelief. But I would, before I proceed, suggest a few things to shew the inconsistency of this sentiment.

1. The Bible does, in fact, represent, that the Gentiles were brought into this covenant, ingrafted where the natural branches were broken off.—Indeed, the Christian church is represented as the continuance of the Jewish church, and therefore, Christians are called fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of the promises, referring evidently to the promises to Abraham. In this view Abraham is called the father of all those who believe; and believers of the Gentiles are called his children and seed, as he was covenant father. If, says Paul to the Gentile converts, "ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." It is a great mistake therefore, to suppose that this promise respected only temporal good and was confined to the Jews.

2. This covenant was far from being a mere shadowy affair: It was a promise of heaven under the shadow of an earthly inheritance.

It is strange that any can read the epistle to the Hebrews, and especially the eleventh chapter, and not see, that the Apostle is confuting this very sentiment. He clearly shows that the godly viewed it as a promise of heavenly good: He therefore brings facts to prove and to establish it. He says, "they died, not having received the promise, but embraced it at a distance; confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers:—And intimates that if all which the promise intended, was enjoyed in this world, God would be ashamed of his promise; but now he is not ashamed."—Yet in fact God did not consider himself under obligation by promise, to confer temporal good on the

faithful: They, in fact, did not enjoy temporal good: They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins. It was a grant of heaven through Christ. The promise that he should be the heir of the world was not to him or his seed through the law. So the Apostle proves that the promise to Abraham was a promise through faith. If, says he, Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory. So he goes on to prove, that, according to the covenant with Abraham, the blessings were by faith: He observes of circumcision, that it was a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had. Indeed it contained in it, a promise of sanctifying and persevering grace.—"I will write my law in their hearts:" So that if there is any covenant of grace, this is it. It is the only way of life revealed since the fall. Any one who will attend to the Apostle's reasoning, may see that life is by grace from the grant that God made to Abraham, and learn how Christians were justified according to that grant: His reasoning on the subject of justification, is taken from this; so that there has been no other covenant of life since the fall.

Hence we see, 1st. that the covenant is of perpetual duration; as really so, as God's unchangeable mercy to his people. All the difference that has ever been made, is in the administration:—There never has, nor can, for substance, be any other covenant with fallen man. This, as has been shown, was a grant of life and heaven thro' faith in Christ; and this grant is still continued and will forever continue.

2. It is styled an everlasting covenant. This epithet is often applied. It is said to be for a thousand generations; which is as many generations, doubtless, as the world will stand. It is to be everlasting, either as to the blessings; (so the

grant an eternal inheritance and consequently the covenant of grace ;) or, as to the continuance of it, or both. Indeed, unquestionably, it is called everlasting in both these respects.

3. It is evidently continued under the gospel; as Abraham is said to be the father of all those who believe, whether of the circumcision or not. The Apostle labors this point and proves that Abraham should be a father of many nations, of all those who walk in the steps of his faith and thus Gentile converts are called his seed. He tells the Ephesian converts, "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise ;" that is, the promise according to the covenant. Now in what sense could a Gentile be a child of Abraham, and Abraham a father, but in a covenant sense, as federal head ? Such expressions can have a consistent meaning, only as the covenant with Abraham is of perpetual duration. Some, and those in general, who deny the seed of God's people to be the subjects of the administration of the covenant, suppose the covenant with Abraham to be abolished.

But I answer,

4. We have seen, already, that the grant to Abraham was a grant on the same condition and by the same means, as the gospel; and so the gospel is no new grant: But as the Apostle observes, God before preached the gospel to Abraham.— The same good is promised, and hence it is the same covenant only in different words. The Apostle shews that it was a grant of eternal life.

5. The same appears from various passages mentioned, as that of the Gentiles being ingrafted, being said to be fellow-heirs, &c. These necessarily convey the idea, that the Gentiles were to be admitted into covenant.

6. The Apostle argues the great doctrines of grace from the covenant with Abraham, as of justification by Christ and by faith in him, and of the saints' perseverance. But what force could there be in such arguments, if the covenant was not of perpetual duration, but superceded by the gospel.

II. I am to consider what God requires in the covenant of the believing parent, as that which is necessary to the salvation of the child, or household. Some have been ready to object to the doctrine of a gracious establishment in the covenant of grace in respect to the household of the believing, faithful parent, as the degree of Christian holiness to which the promise is made is not ascertained. They seem to take it for granted that it is a greater degree of evangelical obedience with which the salvation of the child is connected, than his own personal salvation: But however great the degrees of obedience and faith; yet it is not only obedience and faith in the covenant as it respects our seed: It is not this with which the salvation is connected.

Thus Eli was, no doubt, a pious man and the laws of God lay with great weight on his mind: Yet he failed in his obedience, as it respected his household.

I do not know that it is so much the degree, as what the obedience and faith respect. The Apostle said to the Jailor, "believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved and thine house." I do not know that faith, as it respects household, is required in order that it should be connected with the salvation of the child, in any higher degree than as it respects the parent. We may have faith as it respects one thing and not another.

It is urged by some, that the faith which respects the salvation of our offspring, must be a

miraculous faith, which is not to be expected at the present day. But if it is the case (which is to be considered) that the salvation of the child is held up as an object of faith, then to embrace this good is no more the faith of miracles than our trust in the promise of God, as it respects our own personal salvation, is a faith of miracles.

1. In order to inherit this promise, it is as necessary to believe and embrace, to rest in the word of the promise respecting our household, as to have faith, in order to our own salvation. But in order to our own salvation, it is necessary to rest in the blood of Christ, and see salvation there offered. So, to believe in the promise as it respects our household, supposes that we believe that there is such a gracious establishment. As the first act of faith in the promise, as connected with our own salvation, is by divine constitution, connected with future exercises and evangelical obedience; so the faithful parent who is led to embrace, and lay hold of the promise, has in the promise, assurance given him of grace and strength to discharge his duty to his household.

The Apostle, in the epistle to the Heb. points out the difference between the first covenant, or law, and the covenant of grace. "I will write my law, &c." which seems to contain a promise of strength, in relation to all the duties of the covenant. So that if a creature has once been enabled to embrace the promise, as it respects himself or household, he may rest in it that he shall inherit. On this principle of the parent's professing his faith and dedicating the child, there is a propriety in the administration of the covenant to the child; and indeed of its being treated as a fruit of the covenant.

Hence, there may be not only assurance of our own salvation from the strength of faith, but of that of the child, or household also. I say, faith or a hearty compliance may be connected with a promise of the whole that is requisite; and so the point may be gained: But it is necessary that we should persevere in faithfully training up the child. He who believes, in regard to his own salvation, is assured of it, only, as he perseveres. So it is in this case.

2. Therefore, as a dictate of reliance on God's mercy, revealed in the covenant, the parent is to bring his household to dedicate and resign them up to God, in the way suited to the dispensation of the covenant he is under: And a parent who has this trust and reliance on God, will not delay doing it. Thus it is observed in regard to Abraham; that he took Ishmael and all that were born in his house, and had them circumcised, the self-same day, as God had said unto him. His trust in God and reliance on his mercy led him to submit them to God. So, on the very day that God had appointed, he circumcised Isaac. So the believing Jailor immediately complied with the covenant. A believing view of God's mercy makes the duties of the covenant appear exceedingly important.

3. In order to discharge this duty in a proper manner, we should feel the weight of their soul's concerns, as being infinitely important, and be much more concerned for the souls than the bodies of our children. It appears but a small matter that a child should be poor and despised in this world, if he may be a subject of grace.

4. Under the influence of such engagedness and concern, we should labor abundantly to restrain and govern children. This is necessary in

order to the faithful discharge of duty. And therefore, rebellion in a child was, among the Jews, treated as a great sin, punishable by death. Early endeavors are to be used. It is dangerous and inconsistent with the design and hopeful prospect of the salvation of children to yield the reins.—When children want the indulgence that others have, to go into rude company without restraint, parents should be very careful how they yield :—And as to the strict observance of the Sabbath, the consequences of yielding may be awful. The fate of Eli's children was in consequence of his not restraining them.

5. To properly educate and govern children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is to early and painfully educate and instruct them : It is to lead them into the knowledge of the great truths of religion and to adapt instruction to their young minds. The sloth of many professing parents is highly criminal, and cuts off all reason to hope or expect a blessing. It is duty not merely to instruct, but to endeavor to impress the truth upon them and improve solemn occasions for this purpose. Thus God told Abraham what he was about to do to Sodom, that he might be enabled to train up his children in the fear of God.

6. Careful religious examples of the fear of God are necessary. It is a matter of great importance in relation to a family, that parents are strict and upright in all their conduct. Children watch parents, as to their observance of the Sabbath and the duties of worship.

7. In the exercise of faith in the promises, and a sense of the importance of the salvation of their household, parents ought to cry constantly, and with importunity to God for the salvation of their children, and for strength to themselves to be

faithful, and that God would convert their children.

If we felt the importance as we ought, of the souls of children, it would lead us daily and fervently to supplicate the throne of grace and give us zeal in our endeavors to train up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

III. I proceed to prove the doctrine that God has promised to the believing, faithful parent, saving mercy for his household. If there is such a gracious establishment and constitution, (which is denied by some) it is of vast importance to understand and believe it. It is my design to suggest a number of things which have occured to my mind, as evidence of this truth, to which I would request your candid attention.

1. Let it be premised, that we might naturally expect from the goodness and mercy of God that such provision as this should be made; for if it is not made in this way, there is no mode pointed out nor provision made. Children are not capable of being immediately treated with. To what purpose would the proposal of the covenant be to an infant? What God might do, out of his ordinary way, is not the question. There is the same necessity in making a covenant, that it provide for infant seed as in the first covenant. The infant state of existence shows this to be the way designed. Had God left each child of Adam to stand or fall by itself, it could hardly be reconciled with wisdom and goodness; especially, as ruin came in this way. Such a gracious establishment, therefore, is far from appearing irrational.

2. It appears wise in the Divine establishment of grace, since renewing grace in this way would be an encouragement to holy exertion and express God's delight. God has so adapted things, that

almost all blessings are bestowed in this way.—As for instance the salvation of Lot;—the restoration of the Jews out of Babylon; the coming of Christ, &c.

3. On no other principle than such a gracious establishment, can we account for God's directions and conduct towards the seed of Abraham. God in fact, took the seed of Abraham into his family, and directed the administration of the covenant, which we have seen to be the covenant of grace. God expressly commanded circumcision to be set on the seed of Abraham, at eight days old, which is said to be a seal of the righteousness of faith, an external badge of covenant relation. Now all this, on any other principle, must appear a mystery; but on the principle of such a gracious establishment, there appears in it the highest propriety; as also that the seed of Abraham and the infant seed of God's people should be called and considered holy.

4. Another consideration that makes the truth of this doctrine appear evident, is that the Apostle, in the fifth chapter of Romans, represents that the grace of God had super-abounded all the fatal consequences of apostacy; that where sin abounded, as to its fruits and consequences, grace did much more abound. So also in the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.——Man not only felt his own sinful state, but that he had transmitted his own sinful character to many unborn generations of posterity. So then when God tells Adam, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that grace had super-abounded sin, it would naturally beget an idea, that God had restored a power of transmitting the opposite character, viz. of righteousness.

The Apostle draws a parallel between Adam's representation and Christ's: That as sin and death had reigned by one, and extended their influence from parent to child; so, in a parallel manner, grace had reigned through righteousness.

Now if sin and its consequences were transmitted from parent to child; and, in the establishment by grace, spiritual blessings were not thus conveyed, the parallel would greatly fail.

Such an establishment of grace, may be argued from the representations, that the character of the child is connected with, and greatly depends on the character and conduct of the parent. Thus God says "visiting the iniquities of the father upon the children." God gives the Jews to understand that the child suffered for the sins of the parent, only as like him. So on the other hand, "shewing mercy to thousands," that is, to the thousandth generations, and hence the covenant is called the words which he spake to a thousand generations. It appears that men are so formed as to be treated with in this relation. So it was under the first covenant, and so it is now. It appears from sacred history, that as the character of children much depends on the character and conduct of the parent, so God has treated them in this light. Thus it was in regard to the posterity of Cain: So with respect to Seth: So with respect to Noah in taking his family: So with respect to Ham's posterity: So with respect to Lot, and so with respect to the Patriarchs.——Those salvations in which God manifested special attention to the seed of his people were, no doubt, typical and designed to remind God's people of the nature and extent of his covenant.——It was so on the other hand, as to the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abirem. So with respect to the family of Abab and many other wicked kings.

5. Such an establishment of grace may be argued from various similitudes made use of in Scripture, which can mean nothing short of this. Thus the matter is represented in God's comparing his church to "a vine, wholly a right seed." God says, "how art thou become the degenerate plant of a strange vine!" God refers to his beginning his church with faithful Abraham and Isaac. There is a probable connexion between sowing good seed and having good fruit. Now the comparison would be wholly improper, were there no connexion between the faithfulness and piety of the parent, and the piety of the child. The children of a Jew were members of their church, unless excluded for disobedience. But God's beginning his church with pious members would, upon the ground I have mentioned, be no reason why we should expect piety in any future generation; any more perhaps, than if he had begun with heathen.

So God compares his church to an olive tree, of which the Jews are called the native branches. It is doubtless the case, that Christ is represented by the olive tree, as he is by the vine: Now in what sense were the Jews natural branches any more than the Gentiles? And how was the Gentiles being united by faith any more contrary to nature than the faith of a Jew; unless there was an establishment which, acted up to, would be connected with their union to Christ?

An event is considered as natural, in distinction from supernatural, when it takes place in conformity to established law.

6. We have reason to believe such an establishment of grace, as God proposed various institutions with a view to a holy seed. Thus an eunuch, or one disqualified for the marriage relation, was not permitted to come into the congregation.

This seems to be one way, in which God shews under that dispensation, that it was his design, by the marriage relation, to build up his church and to multiply it. So the prophet Malichi says the reason why God forbade polygamy, was that he might seek a godly seed. This seems to be held up as the reason, why God forbade marriage with infidels and heathen, viz. that it tended to pollute the holy seed. Indeed, it is exceedingly evident, that God has made provision in his covenant, for upbuilding his church by the seed of his people.

7. Such an establishment is evident from the covenant itself, as delivered to Abraham. "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee in their generations;" and it is intimated that this good should come on Abraham, as a fruit of his faith and faithfulness, in commanding his children and household. It may be observed on this passage, that here is the same good promised to the parent, for the child as himself. It is irrational to suppose that, "being a God," intended one thing, as it respected the parent, and another as it respected the child. If it meant a grant of heaven to one, as in fact it did, then it doubtless did to the other also. And as the covenant is explained in my text, God fully engages, on condition of compliance and obedince, that Abraham's children should keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. This same idea is held up in respect to the covenat, as stated and explained in the epistle to the Hebrews. "I will write my law in their hearts, and put it in their inward parts, &c."

It is objected that, by seed, in the covenant, is intended Christ. This is urged from this passage. "He speaketh not to seeds, as of many, but unto thy seed which is Christ:" But understanding the passage in this light would make it appear absurd. It is said, "thy seed after thee in their genera-

tions,"* and this seed were all, at eight days old, to be circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin, and God's covenant was to be in their flesh. How can that apply to Christ which is here said of seed, of Abraham, and his putting the covenant in their flesh? The observation of the Apostle does not refer to this passage, but to the next chapter, where we read, "in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here, no doubt, Christ is intended by seed.

8. Such a gracious establishment, in favor of the seed of God's people, may be argued from many passages, which consider, that in the covenant God has expressed great love to the parents, in doing good to their seed. Thus God, by Moses, tells that generation, "because he would perform the oath which he swear to their fathers;" which seems to hold up the idea, that God has bound himself with an oath, to do good to the seed of his people. See Deut. iv. 37.

So again, he tells Israel, that because he loved their fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them. See Deut. x. 15. Again, "the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them and choose their seed after them, even you;" which clearly holds out this idea, that covenant mercy is bestowed on children, as a reward to fathful parents. So the Apostle, in the eleventh capter to the Romans says, "as touching the election, beloved for the father's sake." Indeed, any one who is acquainted with the Bible, will recollect many passages. I shall mention but these:—"For my servant David's sake, &c." "That he remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, &c."

9. There are many direct promises of good to offspring, where only the character of the parent is brought into view. The Bible abounds with such promises and declarations as these, "but the

mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who remember his covenant. Ps. ciii. 17. Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord, his seed shall be mighty in the earth. The generation of the upright shall be blessed. Ps. cxii. 1, 2. So the children of thy servant shall continue, and their seed be established before thee. Ps. cii. 28. I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26. Thus Moses exhorts to obedience, that "it may be well with them and their children." Deut. xii. 28. So they are exhorted "to fear God for their own good and the good of their children after them." Jer. xxxii. 38. Again, the same idea is strongly and clearly held up in Ps. xxv. 13. "His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth." Isai. lxi. 8, 9. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: All who see them, shall acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

In many of these promises, temporal good is held up, and so it is in regard to most of the promises. This is God's manner of dealing. It is observable, that only the parent's character is held up as a condition of these promises. Now if God's covenant does not hold out to parents mercy for their children, what meaning shall we put upon the foregoing passages? Indeed, if the character of the child and covenant mercy are not held up in such promises, I wish to know what meaning they have.

There are more direct promises of spiritual good to the faithful, believing parent. "Train

up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. I will pour my spirit on thy seed and blessing on thine offspring. Isaiah xliv. 3. The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed to love the Lord with all thine heart." God promises to the believing, faithful parent, "that his children shall be like olive plants." Oil is used as an emblem of grace, and the olive of a good man. It fully appears that the doctrine of a gracious establishment in regard to the seed of the faithful, is fully asserted in a great variety of passages. This is abundantly held up as the way in which God would build up his church, and therefore, the prophet Malachi, looking forward to the gospel day, when God would visit his church, and enlarge it, and save man from God's curse, says, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse:" Mal. iv. 6. John applies this passage to the introduction of the gospel day. Doct. Hopkins says, that "the heart of the fathers being turned" does not mean the increase of what is called natural affection: This, in general, is found in a sufficient degree. He says, therefore, it must intend a religious, pious affection, leading them to a great concern for their children's salvation, and to feel their obligations. "And turn the hearts of the children to the fathers,"—this intends, their minds being disposed to obedience and attention to the pious counsel and instruction of parents—to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that this was to prevent the earth's being smitten with a curse. God had supported the church in this way from the children of the faithful, but now religion had in a great measure run out, and but little of true faithfulness existed. Our Saviour said, "had

not the Lord of Sabbaoth left us a seed, we should have been as Sodom: So the way that God was about to preserve the earth from this curse, was by the dispensation of grace.—It is true, after the Jewish church rejected God's covenant, and were broken off through unbelief, God entered on a method to support and extend his church, out of the ordinary way, by ingrafting in the Gentiles, contrary to nature. This the Apostle considers could not have been, had it not been for the fall and unbelief of the Jews; "through their fall salvation came to the Gentiles."

DISCOURSE XXI.

GEN. XVIII. 19.

For I know him that he will command his children and household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.

HAVING in the preceding Discourse considered three of the things proposed, I come now to the

IV. And last thing, which was to state and attempt to answer a number of questions, partly with a view to obviate objections, and partly as a farther illustration of the subject.

Quest. 1. Is not fact against the doctrine?

I answer, No. We have seen that a person can be truly pious, and indeed, use great endeavors to restrain and educate his children, and not believe in this mercy. David, for instance, seems to confess a want of faithfulness and compliance

with covenant obligation, in regard to his family; yet he holds up this, that it was not for want of provision in the covenant.—"Though my house be not so," says David. Eli also, is an instance of neglect of parental duty. Can an instance be produced of any one, who has exercised faith in God's mercy, revealed in his covenant, and complied with covenant obligations in this respect, whose children have yet remained impenitent? If so, then fact would be against me; but no such case is to be found. It is true that there has been great unbelief in all ages of the church, and so we have seen but little of this grace and important mercy: Yet there has been fruit, and the truth of God has been made to appear, though not in the manner, in which, I trust, it will finally. But we see the truth in Abraham's family. Isaac was an instance of early piety. It is objected that this was not the case as to Ishmael: But it is far from appearing that it was not the case.—Indeed, the godly in general were the seed of his people. Thus Samuel was a child of faith, and Hannah discharged covenant vows.—This was the case with respect to Sampson. Zacharias and Elizabeth were said "to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless." And their son was an instance of early piety.—So Philip's family seem to have been pious: Lois, the grandmother of Timothy, was a pious woman, and her daughter was pious—and Eunice, her daughter, was a pious woman, and she had a pious son.—So we have reason to think that Zaccheus' house was pious.—And the Jailor's. Indeed, instances were so common in the first introduction of the gospel, that it was to be sought for in an elder, that he had faithful children: But this will more remarkably appear when this fruit of the covenant is accomplished. "And they shall no more teach every

man his neighbor, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know him, &c." This is considered as the fruit of the covenant.

I am sensible that *this* is the great difficulty; that we do not *see* it.—But this is no rule of faith. —If we were to take the Bible for our only guide in this matter, it would appear about as plain that the salvation of the seed of the faithful is promised as their own.

Quest. 2. If there is this gracious establishment in the covenant of grace, when has the believing parent reason to expect the conversion of his seed? Some suppose that baptism is not to be administered, as a token of the covenant relation of the child; because he may not be converted till twenty, thirty, or fifty years of age; and I see no propriety in the covenant's being administered to one, who is not considered as in it: I, therefore, consider circumcision under the law, and baptism now, to be administered to the infant, as belonging now to Christ's family. On this principle, there is as much propriety in the circumcision of infants, they being the seed of those that profess and appear to be faithful; and so of baptism, as that the same should have ever been administered to the parents. Hence, in regard to the children of the faithful, as for instance, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Timothy, and John, we have no account of their being awakened and converted. So the Apostle considers, as a fruit of the covenant when fully complied with (which will be the case in the millennial state) that there will be no occasion to call on any to know the Lord, for all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest.

Quest. 3. But how long and to what age is the privilege to be continued, or when may a person be considered of age to act for himself? Some seem to consider, that there is no limitation, and

argue from Abraham's household. He was to circumcise all born in his house, and bought with money, without any limitation ; but the case with Abraham, relative to his household, is widely different from that of one, who has never, in any way, given up his household to God and attended to them. Abraham was in covenant, with his household, before.—Others have supposed that it was continued till of age, and have argued from the same example ; for, say they, children are not the household, when of age, and they are not under the authority of the parent. But it may be observed, that house and household are covenant terms, and, as used in relation to this subject, do not mean every one in the family : As, for instance, in regard to Abraham's household that were circumcised, females could not be included, as they were not the subjects of circumcision. So as to the passover, the Israelites were to provide a lamb for their household : But it is evident, under this dispensation, that the women did not attend sealing ordinances. The direction that God gave was, "three times a year shall all their males appear before the Lord." One was, to attend the passover ; but there was no command, as it respects females. Indeed, no one supposes, perhaps, that in household baptism, the wife or husband was included. And therefore, nothing can be determined merely from the word, *household ;* only, that those were included, who were the subjects of parental dedication. It may be observed,

1. That the privilege does not extend to those already trained up, and that continue in unbelief and sin. The promise is, "train up a child in the way he should go :" But there is no promise in regard to one, who is trained up in the way he should *not* go.

2. Nor can it be supposed, that the privilege extends to any, who have arrived at an age, in which they are capable of being treated with themselves. We have considered that the reason of such provision, is the incapacity of infants being treated with, in a covenant way. We have no reason to expect that God would extend this provision beyond this period.

3. But parents ought not to delay the dedication of their children. Probably there was a reason for fixing the time at eight days old, which may now operate, and the delay was considered a great evil. God met Moses in the inn to slay him, because he had neglected to circumcise his children.

I do not think, therefore, that parents ought to neglect the dedication of children, unless under unavoidable necessity: It has the appearance of contempt of the mercy. But though Moses was criminal in the neglect of his duty; yet still it remained his duty; and the privilege was continued, I say, till the children become of proper age to be treated with themselves. When they arrive at this age, then those who have been dedicated, ought to take the vows of the covenant upon themselves, and attend sealing ordinances. They are then and not till then, the subjects of church government and watch. It is said that the Jews were wont to attend the administration of the covenant. viz. The passover and other feasts, at twelve years of age. This seems to be confirmed by the inspired historian, who says, that Jesus, at that age, went up to Jerusalem, to attend the feast which belonged to the administration of the covenant. No mention is made, though he fulfilled all righteousness, that he ever attended before. So then parents who have neglected till this age, are excluded from the privilege.

Quest. 4. But on the principle that there is a gracious establishment in favor of the seed of God's people, what is their relation to Christ's visible church, where they have been early dedicated to God by baptism? This is a point of great importance. There are different views respecting it. Some suppose no relation; and that the church are under no obligation as it respects them: That parental dedication is a mere family affair.—Others say, they are brought within the pale of the church. I have been ready to think no one has any very determinate idea to this expression, or at most, that it expresses only a partial relation. But others suppose they are in the church; that the covenant defines the limits of the church; if they are in visible *covenant* relation, they are in visible *church* relation. I consider that they stand in the same relation now that they did in the Jewish church, and every one of the seed of God's people (not excluded by discipline), was treated as in a common relation: Indeed, this was the case in regard to all dispensations before. God owned the posterity of Seth in visible covenant relation, (which I consider the same as visible church relation) and they were called "the Sons of God." So, God treated the posterity of Noah: So the seed of Abraham were called a holy people. Indeed the whole Jewish congregation (not excluded by discipline) were called "church;" no distinction being made as to visible relation. Now, there was a wide difference in the administration and government of the church, under different dispensations, but the subjects have been the same.

When I say the seed of God's people belong to his family, or church, I do not mean,

1. That, under twelve years of age, they do so, otherwise than as parts of their parents, and so

not to be considered active members. I do not suppose that the Jewish children attended the passover till twelve years of age. We consider in regard to Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness, that it is highly probable that he never attended till twelve years old. So now children ought not to come to the Lord's supper; nor does the watch and government of the church extend to them, but to their parents.

2. Nor do I consider that there is any propriety in their coming to the Lord's table after that time, till they have confessed Christ before men. This seems, in the new Testament, to be treated as of such importance, that the neglect of it would shut them out of the church. But I suppose they are so, only as implicit or direct excommunication excludes. There is no watch extended by the church to the children of the church, and they grow up in sin and immortality, which is the case with a great part of youth. I do not consider them as belonging to the church: They are implicitly rejected by themselves and the church: And this only, perhaps, justifies the present mode of the admission of the children of professing people, as though they stood in no relation to the church. But from what has been said, a

5th. Question may arise, viz. Is not this what is commonly called the Stoddardean plan, which considers grace not a necessary qualification for communion?

I answer, No. We suppose none to be continued in the church, except as visible friends to Christ. Those who suppose an appearance of real piety unnecessary, hold that a profession of it is necessary: But we have a very different view; nor can we, on the principles advanced, encourage any to attend sealing ordinances, except as friends to Christ. Nor does this principle, prop-

erly attended to, expose the church to be filled up with visible enemies, or such as have no religion. It indeed, requires a careful watch, and the children of Christ's people are to be trained up in the church, as Christ's school: Those who do not live religious lives will appear.

Quest. 6. On the principle of such a gracious establishment, what is the duty of the church toward the children of the church, or in relation to this subject?

1. I have already hinted that while the seed of God's people are to be considered in an infant state, and so, the proper subjects of parental dedication, the watch of the church does not properly extend to them; or at least, they are not the proper subjects of church government. The parents ought to bring them with them to the church, and the church ought to assist in their instruction and labor to awaken their attention. But their watch is over the parents, to see that they restrain and educate them in the ways of the Lord.

2. But when the child arrives at an age to take the bonds of the covenant upon himself, I see not why he does not become a subject of the same kind of discipline with the parent. It was so under the Jewish dispensation. The law and discipline which God instituted, were common to the whole congregation, or Jewish church. The administration, as I have said, varied, but not the subjects. So, the church is now to exercise a different kind of discipline; yet the subjects are the same.——I consider that the church, according to the nature of the case, ought to exercise tender watch over children; if there is any thing against their piety. This ought to be the first object of of labor.—If they appear to be pious, (and I doubt if the church did their duty, that there would be evidence one way or the other) in such case the

church ought to call on them in a tender manner, to confess Christ before men and attend Christian institutions. But, at the same time, there ought to be held up to them the importance of sincerity and faith, in those solemn transactions. Thus Moses did to Israel, while he led them to covenant, he told them of the important things implied in it, that "they avouched the Lord &c."

Some hold, that under the gospel, visibility of faith and love are necessary to a membership in the Christian church; but were not so in the Jewish Church. This is a great mistake. Covenanting implied *then*, as much as it does *now*.— The institutions and laws given to the church, were calculated to separate a peculiar people:— And this was the case, in some measure, and perhaps to as great a degree in the days of Joshua, as it has been in the Christian church. Thus God addresses the church: "I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, &c."

Quest. 7. But supposing the covenant of Abraham to be the covenant of grace, and of perpetual duration, and that it contains in it such a gracious establishment in favor of the seed of God's people; how does it follow, that the infant seed of God's people are the subjects of the administration of the covenant, and particularly, baptism? It must be conceded by every candid person, that if there is such a gracious establishment, there can be no apparent impropriety in the application of the seal of the covenant, but on the contrary, the highest propriety. If they are, as I think has been shown, included in the promise of the covenant, and so have covenant revelation, then it is certainly proper, that there should be the badge of this relation.

I freely confess, if there is no such gracious establishment as we have considered, I do not see the propriety of the application of the sign and badge of covenant relation; but I am as well satisfied with regard to infant baptism, as with regard to infant circumcision, which last was unquestionably applied by divine direction: And so, whether we see or not; yet we are to submit. But it results as a plain duty, if the truth of the doctrine has been established.

1. If the covenant with Abraham is now in force, as we have seen, and the Gentiles are ingrafted, then they are now included in the covenant, as much as then, and have the same relation to God and the covenant, as the seed of God's people under that dispensation: And even if there was a perfect silence in the New-Testament, it appears to me, the duty which we are considering, would be indispensibly binding. We are to look to the covenant, to determine who are included in it and are the subjects of it: The subjects continue the same.—But the covenant is essentially altered, if, as some seem to suppose, the children of God's people are excluded.

2. If they are included in the covenant with the parent, then it is highly proper that they should be distinguished as to the badge of this relation. There is no more reason to exclude them than to exclude any other person not mentioned by name. If they are of Christ's visible family, they are to be treated as such, and are to have one common badge, as under the preceding dispensation.

It is not said, or commanded expressly, as I recollect, that women should partake of the Lord's supper: But, as they are common members, the duty and privilege are inferred by plain implication. So it is in this case. Accordingly, we have examples in the New-Testament of household

baptism: The seed of believers are said to be holy, and infants are said to belong to Christ's kingdom.

Quest. 6. If there is such a gracious establishment, and the seed of God's people are included in the covenant, some may be ready to enquire, whence it is that there are among christians, such different views of this subject? Some suppose that the covenant has no respect to the seed, and proposes nothing to them; but excludes them wholly from its administration. Others consider them as the subjects of the administration of the covenant, while they are visible unbelievers, and are for admitting them to sealing ordinances, while such. Both of these entertain sentiments which appear to me very repugnant to any proper views of the covenant. The first of these contend that the nature of the covenant is perverted, and the seals prostituted, when applied to those who do not, as we have no reason to think, belong to Christ's family. Judging from what takes place in the present state of darkness, they do not attend to any gracious establishment, and so believe that there can be no propriety, from the nature of baptism, that it should be applied to infants. A great part of those who are Baptists, embraced this, perhaps, as a sentiment, that grace is a qualification for communion: but were ready to consider, that if we held to Abraham's covenant, then the seed of God's people would be included. So they were led to adopt loose sentiments about a church.

Another thing which I could here mention, is this: There is a great cross in such a view of the covenant as we have taken, especially to such as have not been faithful. It is a trial to admit sentiments which condemn us. When our children appear to be wicked and unbelieving, to suppose such a gracious establishment, is to acknowledge that we

have been unfaithful. Though, in one view, we might be ready to think all heads of families would be disposed to believe that there is such gracious establishment; yet it brings a great duty on us, as heads of families and as members of the church. If we are under covenant vows, it must rest with solemn weight upon the mind. So, for a church to do their duty, would bring the greatest cross.—To hold that there are no covenant duties would be getting rid of all this weight at once.

I consider that the unfaithfulness of those, who profess to believe that the covenant extends to the seed of God's people, has been the original source of unbelief in this respect. Creatures cannot believe God's word, unless they see it verified in practice, and so reject it.——This is the source of the opposite sentiment mentioned. While we hold that infants are included in the covenant, then they are subjects of the administration of the covenant: This is true; but not as visible unbelievers and enemies.

Quest. 9. But if there is such a gracious establishment in the covenant of grace, why has it not been attended to by good and great men, before the present day? This, I am sensible, has been a strong objection with some. But it has been an objection, which (supposing what is suggested in the objection were true) has shut the eyes of many against real light. This has been a strong objection against what is generally received now, viz. That grace is a qualification for sealing ordinances. So also, with respect to the doctrine of the millennium.

1. But it is not true, that this view of the covenant of grace, as it respects the seed of God's people is a novelty. This appears to have been the view of the covenant entertained by Dr. Watts, Mr. Glass and many others. Indeed, as Dr. Hop-

kins observes, this is the natural import of what has been held by the Assembly of Divines, when they say, that "baptism signifies and seals our faith, and our partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and engagements to be the Lord's;" and then add "that the infants of such, as are members of the visible church, are to be baptized." This must suppose that they are visibly in Christ, and considered as belonging to him: Otherwise there would be an apparent absurdity in the application. Dr. Hopkins quotes the opinion of others, especially Dr. Goodwin. But amongst dissenters it is allowed that this has not been a common understanding of the covenant, and what has led them to disown this sentiment, and some to disown the propriety of the baptism of infants at all, perhaps is, in part,

1. A perversion of the doctrine. The sentiment of such a gracious establishment was, no doubt, embraced by the godly under the preceding dispensation. But others perverted it, and seemed to consider that circumcision would avail to their salvation, especially, as being the seed of Abraham. Therefore, we find our Saviour and his Apostles laboring to beat the Jews off from this groundless notion. They let them know, that circumcision would not avail, unless they were new creatures. So it has been in the church of Rome, and some other churches, called protestant: They have considered baptism to be regeneration: That if parents did give up their children in baptism, this would avail to salvation, and that without this, they could not be saved. Some, to shun a sentiment condemned in the Bible, have given up the idea of any connection between faith and faithfulness. Others have denied that the covenant has any respect to the seed of God's people.

—This has been the way of mankind, to fly from one extreme to the other; and where a doctrine has been perverted, to reject it. This, Dr. Hopkins considers, to have been the case with respect to the doctrine of the millennium.

2. Another thing that might have influence, is, that there is a great cross in the sentiment, attended with answerable practice. In regard to most parents, in admitting this sentiment they must admit, that they have been guilty and unfaithful; which is disagreeable to corrupt nature. So that there is, perhaps, no christian practice that would be attended with a greater cross. Parents would feel greatly tried to have their children dealt with and rejected. It would expose the church to great censure from those without, and would bring a great task on the church, which nature recoils at. So there is a great temptation to embrace baptist sentiments, as this gets rid of all their cross; or to suppose it is only a family matter, and so shift off all the burthen: This is, in one sense, an easy way of getting along. I make no doubt that the inconsistencies and neglects which have attended those, who profess to believe that the covenant extends to the seed of God's people, have, perhaps, done more to promote the baptist profession than all that has been written on the subject.

Improvement.

1. We see from this view of the covenant of grace, that it is a rich display of mercy. It is a great mercy, as holding out free pardon; eternal personal salvation for such infinitely unworthy creatures. We cannot but adopt the words of David, "and yet this was a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God, but thou hast also spoken of thy servants house." When we feel the weight of the salvation of our children and house, and especially, when we are called to view them about to leave this world, we

are greatly comforted when we consider how freely mercy is offered: "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not."

When the Christian, under such a weight, has the covenant opened, he views it as all his salvation and all his desire. Let me, Dear Brethren, invite you to this blessed refuge: You, doubtless at times, feel a great concern for your children.—O bring them to Christ!

2. We see what a solemn thing it is to be a parent, to have such a charge. If we had reason to think the salvation of our children not dependant on what we might do by our prayers and endeavors, the weight of concern, in this view, would appear different—But much depends on us. You, who have never given up your children even in pretence, may find the door as open to you, as to any. The assembled universe will, one day, witness that you have rejected great mercy, as it respects your children: How can you meet them in judgment!—What a day it will be!—How solemn it will be with such parents as have professed to give up their children; yet are dealing falsely with God; betraying solemn trust!

3. If the doctrine to which we have been attending, be true, in regard to the offspring of God's people, we see that there is a great neglect: We need not wonder why there are so few conversions. There is great neglect in parents in the education of their children: They do not dwell on the great truths of religion, when they are by the way, nor restrain them from vice and folly: How great the defect as to example!—How little appearance of feeling the weight of those things!—We see a great neglect in the church. They treat the matter as though there was nothing to do with respect to the children of the

church. How little do we watch over each other in this respect! What do we know about each other's families, whether restrained or instructed!

4. We see what a special mercy the children of God's people enjoy, that they have been dedicated. You are greatly distinguished: Though your parents, no doubt, have reason to mourn; yet you have many great advantages.—You are, in many respects, under great obligations to take baptismal vows on yourselves. Consider what instruction you have had; what prayers have been put up for you by the church; how often your parents have been to the throne of Grace for you.

These advantages, if not improved to a saving purpose, will sink you lower in Hell; however lightly you may treat the subject at present, it will appear no trifling matter at the great day.

I shall close

5. With a word of exhortation to heads of families.

1. I address such as have never, even in pretence, dedicated either themselves or their offspring. I would request you to consider in what light your conduct must appear. You have an open door, but you neglect and undervalue the most wonderful grace!

You plead that you are not prepared; but will such an excuse serve your turn? All your advantages will rise up against you.—What examples are you setting before your children!

2. I address those who do make a profession, and have professedly given up their children to God.—How do you discharge your duty to them? Do you daily pray to God for his blessing upon them? What examples do you set before them? Let me entreat you seriously to weigh the subject to which we have been attending. Remember that if true, it is of vast importance.

DISCOURSE XXII.

MATT. XVI. 18.

I say unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

THERE are, perhaps, no subjects in divinity less thoroughly understood, than the order, membership, power and government of the church. I am sensible myself of the want of a clear light and thorough understanding in many things, which relate to these subjects; yet, as a public instructor, I think it my duty to bestow attention on them at this time; especially, as the church expect soon to give their opinion, as to what are the proper gospel rules and principles of the government of the church.

The occasion on which the words of the text were spoken, appears to have been this. Our Lord had enquired of his disciples, what the opinion of men was about him. Peter relates the different opinions which prevailed about him, among those who thought favorably of him; that some thought him to be Elias, and others Jeremias. Christ asks them, "but whom say ye that I, the son of man, am?" Peter replies, "thou art Chris the Son of the living God." Christ, among other things, observes to Peter, "thou art Peter," (which in the original signifies a rock or stone) and adds, "on this rock will I build my church."

There have been different opinions, as to what is meant by the rock, on which Christ would build his church. Some read it thus, thou art a rock, or stone; but on myself, as a rock, will I build

my church. But in another place, Christ is represented as the chief corner stone in the building. Christ appears here to be holding up to view an infallible spirit of prophecy, that should be conferred on his Apostles. To them were to be entrusted the keys of the kingdom of heaven, &c. By the rock then, on which Christ would build his church, I understand Peter, with the other Apostles under inspiration; or, in other words, an inspired truth. The Apostle seems to allude to this passage, when speaking of the church, he says, "built on the Apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the chief corner stone." The church, then, we may consider, as built on the great truths promulgated in the gospel. It is circumscribed within the limits of the covenant of grace.—The powers of hell may unite to undermine the church; but, being built on eternal truth, it rests on a sure foundation.

I propose

I. To make some observations respecting the church of Christ.

II. Enquire where the power, left by Christ for the good of the church, is lodged?

III. What are the rules of discipline?

IV. On what principles, and in what sense, the children of God's people are included within the limits of the visible church:

V. Attend to a number of questions which respect this subject.

VI. Consider the extent and import of the promise, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I. I shall make a few observations respecting the church of Christ.—The church of Christ is styled the kingdom of God and of heaven. The members of Christ's church on earth, do *visibly* belong to the kingdom of grace: And, therefore,

it is a kingdom of love, under Christ's spiritual dominion.

1. As it is built on inspired truth, so the laws and doctrines contained in the gospel, are the standard by which the church is to be tried and governed. Indeed, the church is instituted to act out the religion of Christ, his doctrines, and the spirit of his laws.

2. As I observed before, the limits of the church of Christ, within which it is confined, is the covenant of grace. All to whom that extends, are included, and none but such. As the promises of the covenant respect the godly and their seed, the children are included, and are the subjects of the administration of the covenant. If it can be established, that they are thus included in the covenant, they are as really the subjects of baptism, and the discipline of the church, as any other persons: But I think this has been fully shewn in the preceding Discourse.

3. None are to be received but such, as have reason to think, that they have embraced Christ, and are heirs of the promise. It is inconsistent to receive any, as in the covenant of grace, with respect to whom we have not charity. The Bible addresses the church, "as called of God, elect, called to be saints;" plainly holding up this idea, that none but such were to be received.

4. A profession of religion therefore, is a profession of hearty compliance with the covenant of grace, and embracing offered mercy. None therefore, are to be received, but such as appear sound in the faith, lead a sober, christian life, and make a christian profession.—Upon the same principles, none are to be suffered to continue in the church, who, by their negligent or immoral lives, give evidence that they have no just claim to the christian character.

5. As the church is as a city set on a hill, instituted to be the light of the world, and is required to let its light shine before men, so the professions that are made, the censures that are passed, and the confessions for public offences, ought all to be public.

6. As the members of a church profess to be united by the strongest ties, to be of one family, and brethren in the same common Lord, so they ought to distinguish themselves, by acts of love, kindness and charity. As Christ's church is a kingdom of love, there should be no dissentions and alienations. The world views brethren in natural relation, when contending or going to law, as acting out of character. When the world looks on our profession, and sees divisions, christian brethren going to law with each other; will not the inference be as in the former case, that there is a want of that love which ought to distinguish brethren? For christians to go to law with one another does, let any say what they will, alienate, unless in some particular, special cases, which are not, perhaps, what the Apostle intends by "brother's going to law."

II. I enquire where the power is lodged, which Christ has left to be exercised for the good of the church, whether in some particular member, or members, or the whole church? I think it evident, that it is lodged in the whole church. Each church has a right to exercise the gifts that God has given them. God has assigned to pastors of churches the administration of ordinances, and the imposition of hands, when a particular church has chosen a pastor. (This I do not call power, in the sense in which I here use the term.) But as to the government of the church, as to receiving, censuring, or rejecting, this belongs to the church.

III. I proceed to make a few observations respecting the discipline of the church.

1. When any brother is offended with another (which any one ought to consider as being the case, when his brother does that, which puts out the light of christian profession, in some considerable degree) he is, in such case, to go to him privately, and tell the fault between him and his brother, in a spirit of love and meekness. In dealing with an offending brother, we are not to treat him as an out-cast and an enemy.

2. We ought, before being reconciled to the offender, to be satisfied as to the restoration of the evidence of his being in the exercise of a christian temper, or in other words, as to his exhibiting the gospel fruits of real repentance. The gospel says, that if he repent and turn again unto thee, he is to be forgiven: But, unless he suitably takes blame, and wants that the reproach should be wiped off, he fails in exhibiting evidence of true repentance.

3. If the offence is known only to ourselves, we can take but a private labor. Our Saviour's caution was, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established. It was considered, under the Jewish dispensation, that one witness should not condemn. So our Saviour acknowledges: I am sensible that some seem to suppose, that we are to take the one or two, whether the offender owns his fault, or not; whether we have evidence of his repentance, or not. But this is presumption. It is not obeying the command of Christ.

4. If the matter can be proved, we, upon failing to gain satisfaction, are to take one or two to join in the labor. The design in taking one or two, is that they may be witnesses of his obstinacy, and also join in the labor, if he neglects to hear them.

5. If he does not hear them, then the matter, by complaint, is to be carried to the church: Af-

ter it is made evident to the church, we are to labor, as is understood, in two admonitions; one before the church, and if without effect, then publicly. "A heritic, after the first and second admonition, reject:" "Those that sin, rebuke before all.

6. After proper waiting without gospel effect, the church are to proceed to rejection. "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee, as a heathen man and a publican;" that is, the church are not only to with-draw watch and fellowship, but common social intercourse—to treat the person as an heathen.—"With such an one, no, not to eat, as the Apostle expresses it."

IV. I enquire on what principles, and in what sense, the children of God's people are included in the visible church? As they are included in the limits of the covenant of grace, (which is the limits of the church) so they properly belong within the limits of the visible church. In infancy they are proper subjects, neither of church discipline, nor of partaking of the supper. When they are of proper age to be the subjects of church government, and to partake of the supper, it becomes them to take the vows of the covenant on themselves, or profess acceptance of the offers and overtures of grace, or in other words, make a credible profession of religion. The neglect of such a profession will be a bar to their communion, though not to watch and discipline. We have no reason to think, that our Saviour ever partook of the passover, or other great feast, which belonged to the administration of the covenant under the Jewish dispensation, till he was twelve years old. No mention is made of his going up till then. Indeed, its being said, that when he was twelve years old, he went up with his parents, seems to imply that he suspended going up till then.

Should it be said, you would continue them in, and admit them to the Lord's supper, if they made a profession of their faith, whether they appear to be gracious persons, or not—I answer—If there should be reason to conclude that they are not christians, it would be a reason to reject them.

Some churches have undertaken to discipline, in some sense, their children. It was probably meant, however, to be a different affair from the disciplining of other members. But, if the word of God points out any, it is the same kind. The reason, as I conceive, why there is no more said of the seed of God's people in this respect, is, that it is common discipline, and one common, external badge: The change of administration respects all.

1. As I conceive, it has been shewn that infants, or the seed of God's people are included in the covenant of grace, and therefore, are under the administration of it, of which baptism and gospel discipline are a part: If they are subject to any discipline and watch, it is that which belongs to the administration of the covenant.

2. Under the preceding dispensation of the covenant, they were not only under the watch and discipline of the church, but it was the same as that of others. Now, if we hold that we are under the same covenant, (only differently administered) then why should we reject the seed of God's people from the discipline of the church, or substitute a different one?

I pass to the

V. Thing, which was, to attend to a number of questions that arise in the minds of some on the subject.

Quest. 1. Was it necessary, according to the divine requesition, that a man should be a good man, in order to be a member of the Jewish church? I answer, that no one in the sight of God

had any more right, without saving grace, *then* than *now*. We have seen that the covenant made with Abraham, was an administration of the covenant of grace. To profess religion, (that which they were frequently called to do) was to profess friendship to God, as Moses reminds them. The grant, as the Apostle observes, even of outward blessings was through Christ. "The promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousuess of faith." Circumcision, which was to be administered, was "a seal of the righteousness of faith." In this view, when they walked in any degree agreeable to their profession, they were called "a holy people," and "Israel is said to be holiness to the Lord."

Quest. 2. What are the proper officers in the church? Answer: Elders and Deacons. Elders are sometimes called Ministers, Pastors, Presbyters.

Quest. 3. Are there no examples in the New-Testament, of ordination of elders, or deacons, by any but ministers of the word? I answer, I can find none. The ordination of deacons was by the the Apostles. The direction was, "Choose ye out whom we may appoint." So the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas, were ordained by the prophets and teachers that were at Antioch; Timothy, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.—So Timothy and Titus were directed to ordain elders in every city, and direction was given them what men to set apart. I cannot find one instance by private brethren. Although I consider the matter in this light; yet I doubt not but that God has owned others that have received it in a different way.

Quest. 4. Does not ordination by elders infringe on the power and right of the church?

I dont see power in it, any more than in the administration of the Lord's supper. What power there is, is in the choice of one to be set apart.—But it may be said, that ministers will ordain none but such as they think qualified. I Answer; neither will they baptize any but the children of those whom they think qualified to enjoy this ordinance.——Christ has promised his church, ministers, to the end of time, and there is no great danger but that the church and his real ministers will agree.

Quest, 5. What is the duty of parents in the discharge of covenant obligation? I Answer: It is an essential duty, that they give them up in faith and belief in the covenant faithfulness of God. Under the influence of this, they are also to give them instruction in the great doctrines of the Christian faith and practice; to take them to places of public instruction; to carry them, when capable of receiving instruction, to meetings of the church, as lambs of the flock; to bear them on the bended knees of their souls to the throne of grace, and carefully watch against all sin.

Quest. 6. What is the duty of the church towards the children of the church? The duty of the church does not so immediately respect children in their infancy. It is their duty rather to watch over their parents, and see that they faithfully educate them, and instruct them in the principles and doctrines of religion, and the duties of the covenant. When they arrive at a proper age, the church are to extend their watch and discipline to them, if there is any thing that renders their Christianity doubtful, or seems to be in the way of a probable profession of religion. If nothing of this kind appears, the duty of taking the bonds of the covenant on themselves is to be inculcated; while at the same time, the importance of acting a sin-

cere part is to be urged, and the danger of pretending a desire to be for God, if they are not.—The church are to assist and direct them, as to the exercises of their minds. Indeed, they are to be urged by the gentle gospel steps, to appear openly on God's side. But if they do not manifest themselves to be the friends of religion, and even persist in the neglect of it, after proper forbearance, they must be rejected. This seems to be the consequence of their being included in the covenant, and so within the limits of the visible church.

Quest. 7. But what is to be done, as to those who have arrived at maturity, without the care and watch of the church, and are immoral, giving all reason to think that they have no saving knowledge of the truth; which is the case with the greater part at the present day.——I think the church have reason to confess their neglect; as the most unhappy consequences may be the fruit of this their neglect. The persons whom we are considering, are to be invited by the church to attend to instruction and submit to their watch. If they neglect or refuse, I do not think that they are, in this situation, the proper subjects of discipline.—The church are to conduct in some such manner as the Apostles did in respect to the Jews, when they rejected the word and turned away. They were to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; so there is a special obligation on Christians in respect to the children of the church. But if they turn away, so are we to turn away.

Quest. 8. Did not children and infants eat of the passover; and why may they not now, if they stand in the same relation to the church? I Answer, it by no means appears to me that they did. It is true, that it was provided for [illegible] *household.* This was a covenant expression, intending in relation to circumcision, those that were to be given

up by the head of the family; and in relation to the passover, intending those that are the proper subjects. It does not appear, that either women or small children were to attend. All the males were directed to attend this and other great feasts; but there was no direction to carry their children, till they were able themselves to go up. It is said that the Jews attended the passover, at about twelve years of age. The inspired penman takes particular notice of our Saviour's going up at this particular age; which example was, no doubt, left for our instruction.

Quest. 9. At what age are children to be considered the proper subjects of church discipline, and to be given up on their parents account?—Probably, the time when they become subjects of discipline, of partaking in sealing ordinances and of taking the vows of the covenant on themselves, and the time when they are to be given by their parents are the same. A reason, as we have considered, of the covenant's extending to the seed of God's people, is their incapacity to act for themselves. When they arrive at an age in which they have ripeness of capacity to act for themselves, the reason and consequently, the privilege ceases. Besides, the promise that children should walk in the way in which they should go, is made to parents, on the supposition that they faithfully discharge their duty, or train them up in that way. We have seen that the age at which, under preceding dispensations, children were to attend sealing ordinances was about twelve.

Quest. 10. Since the families of God's people are to be one branch of Christ's school, to train up children for him, ought the church to tolerate their members, in marrying to persons openly profane and vicious—to infidels, or those who hold to damnable heresies? Answer. I do not

see it to be proper. I do not see how a christian, under any proper sense of religion, could feel reconciled to a marriage of this kind. It must subject to every inconvenience respecting the education of children. "Be not," says the Apostle, "unequally yoked with unbelievers." Nehemiah, remonstrating against such a practice, refers us to its pernicious influence on Solomon. "Did not Solomon," says he, "king of Israel, sin by these things?"

Quest. 11. May churches, in forming, have respect to agreement in sentiment, as well as local situation? I see not why they may not. I see nothing that shews, that situation was the only thing to be regarded.

There are differences of sentiment in which the Bible inculcates forbearance; yet these differences may render it inconvenient for different persons to be in one church together. The Bible opposes the idea of christians walking contrary to the fellowship of the gospel, one with another; yet being in distinct churches is consistent with fellowship.

Quest. 12. Does the gospel tolerate two churches, as churches of Christ, in being out of fellowship, or denying fellowship, one to another? I see nothing that can justify this.

Quest. 13. What errors in judgment, or practice, are to be considered as censurable, and what not? Or, what is the gospel rule of christian forbearance? I answer. Though there are some few things which the gospel points out, as censurable, some things with respect to which we ought to forbear; yet it, in no measure, points out every matter which we ought to treat as trespass, but leaves it to christian judgment. That difference with others which does not, under the most lively sense of religion, weaken our charity for them, as

christians, attending to the gospel fruits of religion, is matter of forbearance: As for instance, if one thinks he ought to pray kneeling, this ought not to destroy our charity. That error in sentiment, or practice, which, under the most lively views of religion, does, in our view, put out the light of any, as christians, and weaken greatly, or destroy the evidence of their being christians, is to be considered as trespass.

Quest. 14. Does the gospel point out any suspension, or censure, short of excommunication, whereby a person is to be debarred from communion? Some churches let their members stand suspended, from month to month—or admonish, and so leave them: But I find no gospel authority for such a practice. The gospel direction respecting an obstinate brother, is, if he neglect to hear the church, let him be as a heathen man and a publican.

Quest. 15. May a church tolerate a withdrawment in any of their members, either because they question their own good estate, or because they are dissatisfied with the church, or for any other reason? I do not see how they can; because they doubt their own good estate: For if the church have reason to think they are not christians, this is a reason why they should, in a gospel way, proceed against them. If they still hope they are, while the church thinks otherwise, the gentle steps, which the church is to take with them, are the means pointed out in the gospel to recover them.

If they withdraw through dissatisfaction with the church, the church, if upon thorough examination they find themselves to be in the wrong, are to reform, and take up the stumbling block. If the church are satisfied that they are not in the wrong, they must consider their brother a covenant breaker and an offender.

Quest. 16. May one member withdraw, because he is dissatisfied with another, before the reasons of his dissatisfaction can be proved to the church? I see nothing in the gospel that tolerates such a withdrawment. The gospel directs to treat every member as a brother, till the means of his repentance have been used. To withdraw, in the manner supposed, is, as to visible conduct, to treat the whole church as offenders, as much as the person with whom we are dissatisfied.—*It is* no reason why we should neglect our duty and privilege, because our brother does wrong. We may admonish our brother, that "if he has ought against a brother, he should leave his gift, and go and be reconciled," according to the direction in Matthew's gospel.

I pass to the

VI. And last thing proposed, which was, to consider the extent and import of the promise, "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church."

1. Negatively: It does not mean that particular churches may not dwindle, and their candlestick be removed. This has been the case with many: It was particularly the case with the seven churches of Asia, mentioned by John in the Revelations, and in fact, has been the case with all the churches planted in Asia and Africa. No doubt there are many churches, which Christ once owned, which are now rejected. The promise in the text does not secure the purity and perpetuity of any particular church.

2. Nor does it mean but that churches may be finally preserved, though left, for a time, to a low state. Error may creep in, but the promise is an absolute engagement, that Satan, united with all his instruments, shall not be able to root his church out of the world, and that Christ will, in

the end, somewhere have a church.——Some have thought that this does not necessarily suppose the existence of a visible church; but that Christ will, in every age, have his friends that belong to his invisible kingdom in the world. They suppose that the visible church *has* ceased, and that this is what is signified by the "woman's fleeing into the wilderness." But this idea I cannot admit. It is evident that Christ was speaking of the visible church. "The woman's fleeing into the wilderness," denotes a state remote from the seat of the beast. So the outward court of the temple's being left out, to be trodden under foot of the gentiles, is supposed by some to mean the outward profession of religion; who would hence argue, that the church ceased to be visible. However this might be the case in some respects; yet I cannot conceive that this was universally the the case. Were there only here and there a christian, such persons could not in any proper sense of the word, be said to constitute a *church*. I understand the text therefore, to be a promise that Christ would, in all ages, even in the darkest times, preserve a visible church: I say visible; for though, at times, it might be greatly corrupted; yet it would be so preserved as to be, in some degree visible.

I shall now attend to some considerations which may establish this truth.

1. It would be a great triumph of Satan, should he be able wholly to root out the church. As Christ came to establish and redeem a church, we may naturally be led to expect that, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell, he will maintain it. Should a visible church be rooted out, Satan would have gained his point.

2. We might, from Christ's mercy to his church, expect that he would support and uphold

it. He considers his church as his espoused, and it is to him infinitely dear, It looks unlikely, that he would leave it to be swallowed up by its adversaries.

3. The church, even in the lowest times, is addressed as existing. I refer to a passage in Isaiah, which is an address to the church, under the similitude of a barren woman, looking forward to her millennial state. The church which will then rise to great glory, is not represented as begun anew; but as being revived from a low estate. In this light is the matter treated in various passages. "The mountain of the Lord's house being exalted from a low estate," represents the church, and so "the church looking forth."—The representations, in general, of the church at the commencement of her happy days, do not speak of God's raising up a church, which before had no existence, but of his visiting and reviving the church from a low estate: Thus, at the commencement of the millennium, the Jews will be called in and engrafted into the church, from which they were broken off.

4. God, in the view that Moses had in the bush, represents the church as remarkably preserved in a very low estate. In the lowest times of the Jewish church, God tells them that he was "married to them." Indeed, as I have understood the text, it is an absolute promise.

5. We have reason to conclude, that God will preserve his church to the end, as, in spite of all Satan's wiles, it has been hitherto preserved.—If we attend a little to the preservation of the church, in the darkest time before the flood, though there never were fewer godly than at that time; yet still God had a church in the family of Noah. After idolatry prevailed among the descendants of Noah, God called Abraham, and set up his church

in his family. When many of the Jews in Egypt, had turned away, and conformed, in some degree, to the idolatry of Egypt; yet God represents them as his church and people. He held up, in the darkest times, the idea of their covenant relation. So when our Saviour came into the world, though the Jews had become greatly corrupt, yet our Saviour implicitly acknowledged them as the church of God: He attended their ordinances, and extended to them acts of fellowship: Nor were they disowned, till the establishment of the christian church.

When religion greatly declined in the christian church, and it was overspread with popery, God still preserved an interest. Though the true church ceased to be visible at Rome, the seat of the beast; yet, in remoter parts of Europe, God had a cause and interest; first among the Waldenses, and before they were broken up, God poured out his spirit in Bohemia, under the preaching of John Huss, and not far from this time, by John Wickliff, in England, and Jerome, at Prague, in Bohemia. About a century after John Huss, was Martin Luther, of Germany, and Calvin, of Geneva. Though the situation of the church has been shifting; yet it is evident that the gates of hell have not prevailed, and as we have reason to believe, never will.

Improvement.

1. We see the wonderful support which God, in his promise, affords his church; that he will preserve it, nor suffer Satan wholly to destroy the little flock. Indeed, the church has been a standing monument of God's covenant mercy and faithfulness. When unbelief has been ready to suppose that the church must sink, God has always appeared, and afforded his people the surest ground of trust in his providence.

If it is the purpose of the great head of the church, to maintain it in the world, till the final consummation of all things, and till it ascends in triumph and glory, then, however dark and low things may appear; yet we may trust in the divine promise, that the church will yet arise out of its low estate, and may joyfully anticipate the glory, purity and peace, which shall one day adorn the church—and darkness and distress shall flee away.—In this view, how impotent is the rage of earth and hell to root out the church! It will stand, however it may be oppressed. Though God may, as in past ages, suffer it to be brought low and greatly oppressed; yet he will still shew his care and covenant faithfulness: The power and grace of God never shine brighter, than when the church is raised from the lowest estate.

2. Though all the attempts of earth and hell, to root the church out of the world, will be baffled; yet God, agreeably to his holy threatnings, may remove the candlestick of particular churches. What God has already done to many churches, ought to be improved as a solemn warning to churches, to guard against every evil which may creep in, and offend the great head of the church.

3. We see that the government and discipline of Christ's house ought to be undertaken upon right principles. Discipline, tho' faithful, should be gentle. It is to be administered in the spirit of meekness. "Ye that are spiritual," says the Apostle, "restore such as are in the spirit of meekness." It is to be lamented, that discipline is too often undertaken as a quarrel: Whereas, it ought to be undertaken in the exercise of spiritual views, a meek temper and charity; which will lead us to treat an offending member of the church, as a brother, and not as an enemy.

4. The Christian life, faithfully pursued, is not an idle life. There is a large field for improvement in the vineyard of Christ. You will perhaps be ready to complain and say, that if all which has been mentioned, be the duty of a church, then a very great task is imposed on them. I am not at all disposed to deny the charge. We have great work to perform, as parents, as church-members towards the children of the church, towards one another, and especially in regard ourselves.

5. On a review of our subject, we are led to see how far faithfulness extends. We may see what we are to do, and also, what we have neglected; and the neglect, I trust, appears great to a sensible mind. How great the neglect every way! In regard to us, my brethren, how much have we left undone! And how little of a right spirit have we possessed, when we have attempted to do any thing!

6. Let me exhort in the first place, the professors of Christ to rouse: The work which you have to do for Christ, is very important. No doubt, if you were faithful, as parents and members of Christ's church, there would be more abundant fruit visible.—You are under every possible obligation to be faithful to Christ. Consider how faithful he has been to your souls in the work of redemption and free pardon. Remember also, that there is nothing in our power, which tends more to the salvation of sinners, and to the flourishing of religion, than Christian faithfulness.

The subject may afford a use of exhortation to those who have never engaged in Christ's service in his church. You cast practical contempt on that service. The cause which you neglect is a glorious cause. The service of Christ is a mean of fitting men for that salvation and glory, of which they stand in perishing need. While you

neglect Christ's *visible* kingdom, take good heed that you do not come short of his kingdom of glory.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.

IT is no trifling matter, as it relates to us, whether, beyond this life, there is a state of misery or not—And if there is, whether it be for a limited period, or of endless duration. There is an infinite difference between a state of misery for a million of ages, and one without end. On the supposition of a limited punishment, the folly and danger of delay appear trifling, to what they do on the principle of endless sufferings, as the fruit of impenitence. If men, continuing impenitent, are exposed to endless misery, it is not to be thought strange, that faithful ministers should dwell much on the danger of eternal death. Some may not *now* wish to hear the doctrine, and pronounce it harsh: But such persons, when they come to realize the consequence of final impenitence, will be astonished that ministers should not have been always sounding the danger in the ears of sinners.

The chapter from which the text is taken, is one of the most solemn parts of scripture. It gives a lively representation of the day of judgment

and end of the world; it describes the sudden manner in which Christ will appear; that all nations, indeed, all intelligences will assemble, and Christ the judge, will make a solemn separation of the righteous from the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He will then lay open to the wicked, their conduct and state. "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, thirsty, and ye gave me no drink, &c."——"And those on the left hand, shall go away into everlasting punishment."

What I shall attend to from the words, is

I. That there will be a state of punishment for some of the race of Adam, after the death of the body.

II. That this state of punishment, to which those who finally remain impenitent, will be doomed, will be without end.

I. I shall attempt to show that there will be a state of punishment for some of the race of Adam, after the death of the body.

Here I shall consider

1. The nature of the punishment:

2. That there will be such a state of punishment beyond death.

I. As to the nature of the punishment, there will be various things which will contribute to it. The first thing which I shall mention, is a sense of God's wrath, which will be poured out without mixture. The day of Judgment is called "the great day of his wrath:" But few can have any proper sense of its weight, who have been stupidly insensible. Some have had a sense so as to realize how dreadful it is to feel the displeasure and rebukes of an infinite enemy.——I might mention also, the stings and reproaches of conscience, which some have experienced to be

exceedingly dreadful, even in this world. It will be a state of despair: All the hopes of the wicked will be cut off. They will experience amazing horror of mind, as well as keen bodily anguish. We have reason to think that, as the body has been a partaker in sin, it will be raised and united to the soul, that both may share in the punishment. Some of the representations respecting "fire and brimstone, being drowned in perdition, torn asunder, &c." may, in certain respects, be figurative; yet there are so many plain, literal representations as to admit of no doubt of keen bodily anguish.——We have reason also to think, that the misery will complete, as relates to the body and mind; as great as the capacity will admit.

2. There will be such a state of misery with relation to some of the race of Adam.

The Bible not only declares that men, who do not believe and repent, shall be damned (and it appears at the present day, that the greater part of mankind die without repentance and faith) but it fully and clearly represents, that a great part of mankind will, and do resist the overtures of grace, and perish.——As many would insinuate that men, either before or after death, are brought to repent, I shall not, in establishing this point, bring passages which declare what the inevitable consequences of unbelief and impenitence will be, but such as represent, that there will be monuments of wrath and justice.

1. There are various passages which represent that, at death, men will enter on a state of misery. This seems to be abundantly held up in the book of Proverbs; where the character and end of the righteous and wicked are contrasted. "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation perisheth;" Prov. xi. 7. Again, "The hope of the righteous

shall be gladness: But the expectations of the wicked shall perish." Prov. x. 28. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul: Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh?" Job. xxvii. 8.—Scripture furnishes many representations of this nature. These passages, without any comment, hold up clearly a state of punishment after death.

2. The doctrine of future punishment is fully established by those passages which mention that the ungodly will be raised to shame and punishment. Many, if not all of those, who deny the doctrine of future punishment, consider, that when the soul leaves the body, it is purified from all sin, and goes directly to a state of happiness. But those passages that represent that some will rise to shame and everlasting contempt, not only suppose a state between death and the resurrection, but *after* the resurrection. I would mention but two or three passages. One is in Acts, and is as follows: "There will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." Another is in John v. 29. "They that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." See also, Daniel xii. 2. "Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

3. Some hold that men will be purged from their sins, before the soul leaves the body: But the scripture declares that "some shall die in their sins;" which implies that the guilt of them will remain: It is said that they die in an unpardoned state, and so the future world will be a state of wrath. See Ps. xciv. 23. "He shall bring on them their own iniquity and cut them off in their own wickedness." Our Saviour told some of the Jews expressly, that "they should die in their sins." He repeats it. See John viii. 21. 24.

4. The doctrine of election and reprobation necessarily supposes a state of future misery for some, as well as happiness for others. We find in Scripture, such expressions as these, "many are called, but few chosen." Again, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, &c." "The election obtained it, the rest were blinded. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." The Apostle says, "what if God willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." God is said "to create the wicked for the day of evil." For which cause, he shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned."

5. There are various parables which fully represent the future punishment of finally impenitent sinners. I refer you to the parable of the sower and seed; A great part of those that seemed to receive seed, yet finally brought forth no fruit to life: See, also, that of the marriage supper; of the tares and wheat; See Matt. xiii. 24.38. See also, that of the ten virgins in the xxv. chap. of Matt.

6. There are many passages of scripture which fully hold up the idea, that many will finally perish. Matt. vii. 13. 14. 21. 22. 23. also, xxiv. 50. 51. and xxv. 30. Luke xiii. 24.——"With all deceivableness of unrighteousness." See II Thess. ii. 10. "To the one, we are a savour of life unto life; to the other, of death unto death." II Cor. ii. 16.——Indeed, it would be absolutely dark, unaccountable and irreconcilable with the government of God, that all should go to one state. God supported David's mind with a view of what was to be beyond the grave.

I pass to the

II. Thing, which was, to consider that the punishment to which some, who will continue to reject the overtures of life, will be doomed, will be without end.

1. It is evident that this must be the case; for destruction is frequently said to be the end of the wicked, as in the lxxiii. Ps.; "then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into destruction." "Whose end is destruction." See Phil. iii. 19.

2. It is evident that some will finally perish, as it is said, that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin:" So that those who die impenitent, must stand on the footing of law. Our Saviour also represents by a parable, that "if men are cast into the prison of hell, they shall not come out till they have paid the utmost farthing;" that is, the full demands of law will be exacted. But the debt is infinite, as appears by various considerations; so that they can never be discharged.

3. It is evident that those will be punished forever who have committed what is called the unpardonable sin. Our Saviour intimated that some of the Jews had committed it. It is said that "it shall not be forgiven." Of consequence, they must lie under the guilt of it. See Luke xii. 10. "It shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." The Bible speaks only of two worlds; the one to succeed the other: So that there cannot be any expression more strong. See Matt. xii. 31. 32. Again, it is said, "it hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of hell-fire."—See Mark iii. 29.——So in another place, speaking of those who fall away, it is said, that "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

4. It is said of Judas, that it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.

5. The Bible represents this as the only state of mercy; that if men are not made the subjects of grace and life here, they never will. "We are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body." So that were there any such thing as future repentance, this would not come into the account. But we have the authority of scripture for saying, that if men die in a state of impenitence, they will be confirmed in it: "They that are unjust shall be unjust still. As the tree falleth so it will lie." From the connexion, it appears, that these words refer to death, and hold up this idea, that in the state in which men die, they will continue. So the wise man exhorts, "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no knowledge, wisdom, nor device in the grave whither thou goest." To this purpose are the words of the Apostle, "not willing that any should perish, &c." which supposes that if ever they repent, it must be here.

6. Another argument that may serve to establish the doctrine of future punishment, is that the Bible fully represents that some, at the day of judgment, will be sentenced to a state of misery: And they must, of course, continue in it; as then Christ will lay aside his mediatorial character, and give up the kingdom to the Father, and no more will ever be called in.

7. There will be no mercy, no discharge from a state of misery, as to some, since God represents that he will not hear their cry. "Then shall they call, but I will not answer." So it is represented, that when the door is shut, many will cry, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer and say, I know you not, whence ye are: Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able:" That it shall be with impenitent sinners, as it was with Esau,

"who found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

8. The Bible fully represents that hell, and the means of their suffering will forever continue.—The fire is said to be "unquenchable." It is said, a number of times, that their "worm shall not die: Their fire shall not be quenched:" the pit of hell is said to be "a bottomless pit."

9. The Bible in the fullest and strongest terms possible, represents the misery of the wicked as endless. It is called "everlasting punishment, everlasting fire:" They are said to be punished with "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord: The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever." Indeed, the punishment is represented as eternal; "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." If these expressions do not represent future misery endless, no language can.

The Bible is much more full and frequent in representing the endles misery of the damned, than the endless happiness of the saints: Why is the former so often, and the latter never called in question?

It is objected by some, that by the goats are meant *sinful actions*. This seems to be too ridiculous to deserve a serious answer. The Bible represents that tribulation and anguish will be on the *souls*, not the sins of men.—Besides, what are actions, separated from agents? How would the words that follow, read? I was hungry, and ye (i. e. sins) gave me no meat, &c.

It is further objected, that the words in scripture which describe future punishment, do not signify endless duration. It is urged that the word *ever*, is applied to things that do come to an end. For instance, in grants made by men, a thing is said to be granted forever, and so can never be re-

versed. But such grants respect things, which in their nature have an end. On this principle, punishments will run parallel with existence. But I insist, that some of the passages in scripture are applicable only to endless duration.

Inferences.

1. Is it not strange, in a view of all that is said in the Bible respecting future punishment's being without end, that any should deny it, who hold to the Bible! It is difficult to account for this, except in the way mentioned by the Apostle, that some are "given to strong delusion to believe a lie."

2. In this view, how precious is time in a state of probation! How important are matters of religion, as the means of escape from future misery! What ought we not to be willing to do, or suffer, if it may be the means of our escape from such dreadful evil?

3. How amazingly hazardous and dreadful is the state of delaying, impenitent sinners, suspended over eternal burnings! O, be exhorted to awake up out of the sleep of eternal death, and lay hold on the hope set before you.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

MATT. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.

HAVING in the preceding Discourse from these words, considered,

I. That there will be a future state of punishment for some, who will finally remain impenitent, and

II. That it will be without end, I shall, in the following discourse, attend to the arguments and objections which are urged, in opposition to the doctrine of future punishment.

1. Some seem to think, that however there may appear some things in the Bible, which favor the idea of endless punishment; yet, that the doctrine is inconsistent with God's infinite perfection. I answer. To me it does not appear at all so. It is surely not inconsistent with justice, but the only way to make a full display of it. A universal exercise of pardon would not be consistent with the most perfect displays of justice and zeal for the support of government.—Should there be a general revolt in a kingdom, and universal pardon be exercised in consequence, government would be trampled on.—That God should draw a shade to give lustre to the triumphs of mercy, appears perfectly consistent. In any other way, there would not be a full display of the Deity. The illustration of justice is what the friends of God greatly delight in; and the displays of it in hell, will render his character the object of much greater delight.

2. It is objected, that the doctrine is inconsistent with the view which the Scripture gives of the goodness of God. "He is called love; he is a parent; his tender mercies" are said "to be over all his works." I answer. We are very benighted creatures, and do not see the great ends of the divine government. Besides, to depraved and impenitent minds, things appear very different from what they are. How exceedingly different does the exercise of justice appear to a person under the dominion of sin, and one brought to view things right. The latter is swallowed up in a view of the glorious righteousness of God and his opposition to sin; and it appears that if God were less so, he would appear less glorious.

It doubtless appeared to the Israelites, goodness in God, and they celebrated it as such, when God swallowed up Pharaoh, sent plagues on Egypt, and delivered his church.

If, as some suppose, goodness is opposed to just severity, then they cannot view God as perfectly good, since, in past ages, he has exercised great severity: He drowned the old world; burnt up Sodom, and plagued Egypt. If these things are not inconsistent with goodness, how can it appear that his expression of infinite displeasure and disapprobation of sin in the endless destruction of the impenitent, is so? God's goodness is in perfect consistency with endless punishment. There will not be one in hell, who will not then see that God has been exceedingly good and kind.

The objection is founded on exceedingly wrong notions of divine goodness and love.—The most perfect goodness and benevolence respect the highest good of the whole. For a prince, or judge to spare a criminal at the expence of the happiness and peace of a whole kingdom, would be opposed to goodness. Goodness will prompt to the exercise of justice. I agree that God is all love and goodness: But love and goodness pursue that which is for the highest glory of God and the good of his kingdom.——On no other principle can I conceive that God will vindicate his own glory.

3. Various passages of Scripture are urged as inconsistent with the doctrine of endless punishment, and as holding up universal salvation. For instance, such as these: "The lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. John i. 29. He gave himself a ransom for all. 1 Tim. ii. 6. that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for every man. Heb. ii. 9. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our ours only, but

also for the sins of the whole world."—I answer, There is a wide difference between universal salvation and universal atonement. All that such texts hold up, is, that the *atonement* is complete and universal. The difficulty, or bar, as to atonement, is fully removed. Christ has, in this sense, put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.—But some seem to argue in this manner;—If Christ died for all, and his atonement is not applied to all, then there was needless expence, and he must be disappointed.—Christ's dying for all, does not suppose he expected, that all would be benefited. He is, in a peculiar sense, a Saviour of the elect: He is said to be "a Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe."

The objection is founded in a mistake respecting the atonement, and wrongly supposes, that what was *necessary* for one, is *sufficient* for all. The reason why all are not saved, is their obstinate rejection of the free offers of salvation: It can be owing to nothing else.

4. Such passages as the following, are urged by some, in favor of universal salvation. "Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. ii. 1.—As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Ezek. xxxiii. 11." These passages hold up nothing more, than that God is benevolently disposed towards sinners, and is willing to save all that will accept; that God is sincere and benevolent in his offers; that he does not offer life, when he has no friendship respecting their salvation; that though, as he told them by the prophet, if they rejected warnings and admonitions, they should die in their sins; yet that his inflicting death would not be owing to any pleasure he has in their death, in itself considered.—Creatures sometimes inflict pain and punishment,

because they delight in it: But such conduct is inconsistent with the benevolence of the Deity.

Those who would improve these passages to establish universal salvation, suppose them to mean, that God does, in relation to all things, effectually *will* their salvation: But this is far from being necessarily implied. The expressions do not naturally hold up any more than this; that the destruction of no one is, with God, the object of will and choice; but rather his salvation, considered in itself.—A person may be said to *will* any thing, when it is preferred to some other object of choice. I may, for instance, *will* the possession and enjoyment of limbs, in preference to the loss of them; still, there would be no inconsistency in my prefering life to the possession of them, and even submitting to amputation. So God, in the evils which he actually brings on sinners, does not will, or prefer their misery. But he must prefer his glory and the display of justice, even to their life: Otherwise, he could not have destroyed Sodom and inflicted other judgments.

On the whole I consider the words in question, as holding up nothing that respects the salvation of all: Their meaning is this merely; that the Saviour is benevolently disposed in respect to their salvation.

5. Such passages as these are urged in favor of universal salvation: "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." Gen. iii. 15. For this cause, the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. I. John iii. 8.——If "bruising Satan's head," intends barely this, that after so many thousands of years, natural and moral evil shall be rooted out; then, his head cannot have been effectually bruised. He will triumph in having carried his point for so many thousand years, in having introduced confusion into God's

world, in having made such havock, and led him to so great expence, to check the spread of evil. If this is what is meant by bruising Satan's head then it has not yet, nor ever can be done. But if bruising Satan's head, and destroying his works, means what it unquestionably does, viz. that all which he has ever done, all natural and all moral evil, will be overruled to promote those ends, which Satan meant to defeat, then this will undoubtedly be effected.

6. Some urge certain passages in 1. Cor. xv. as favorable to universal salvation. "He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet, &c."—Again, "O death, where is thy sting, &c."

As to the first passage, their ceasing to be enemies, is inconsistent with the triumph of the Redeemer, in which there is an allusion to the manner, in which triumphs were celebrated in ancient times. The conqueror was accustomed to adorn his triumph by captives selected from among the most powerful and inveterate of his enemies.—His reigning till he had put all his enemies under his feet, might allude to the practice of the captains in the army of Joshua, an eminent type of Chirst, who put their feet on the necks of the kings of Canaan.

The important idea contained in these and many similar passages of scripture, is, that all things will be subdued to Christ, and all evils, natural and moral, be rendered subservient to his glory and triumph.

With respect to the other passage, "O death, where is thy sting, &c." it may be observed, that the Apostle is here treating on the subject of the resurrection. It is a gross perversion of the passage to suppose, that it has any reference to a resurrection or restoration from the dominion of

sin. The Apostle was upon the subject of bodily resurrection. It was the triumph over death, in this sense, that Christ effected. Accordingly the Apostle says, if the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen. It would be blasphemy to suppose, that the resurrection and triumph of Christ was from the dominion of spiritual death. The triumph over death has therefore reference only to natural death. But supposing that this was not the case, the Apostle is speaking only of believers, Christ's own people, who are united to him as members of his body.

7. What has been said may enable us to see that the following passage, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" which is urged in favor of universal salvation, has no reference to the subject. It is brought to establish this point, that the resurrection of the saints is involved in Christ's resurrection. But what is said of death and resurrection (which is a victory over it) wholly respects the body.

But supposing it referred to victory over spiritual death, the Apostle is here speaking only of believers. So that the meaning would be, that as death came on all Adam's seed, he being their representative; so life came on all Christ's spiritual children, or people, he being their federal head.

If this should not be satisfactory, it may be observed that the word *all*, by no means, in a logical or Scriptural sense, intends always every individual, as will be hereafter shewn.

8. Some urge such passages as the following: Philip. ii. 10, 11. That "at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, &c."—So also, Rev. v. 13. "and every creature which is in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, &c." So Eph. i. 10. "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather to-

gether in one, all things *in* Christ, or, as it may be rendered, *under*. So also, a passage in Col. i. 20. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in heaven, or things in earth, &c." Some have considered these passages, as referring to a voluntary homage and subjection, and so would urge, that all are to be sanctified.—But in my view, they refer to *inanimate* things, and if they prove any thing, they prove too much, viz. that things under the earth and in the sea, will be brought to voluntary homage.——The words hold up two great and important events; one is, that universal existence will be subjected to Christ and rendered subvervient to his will: The other is, that all things which, by the ruin of man, had fallen into confusion and disorder, should be rendered subservient to the divine glory and praise; that natural and moral evil, in themselves disagreeable, and tending to the dishonor of God, should, by the work of redemption, be overruled to the glory of God, and made subservient to his praise. The wrath of man shall praise him, and he will be glorified in all the evils and persecutions, of which Satan may be instrumental. Indeed, the gospel of Christ is, in the hands of his ministers, a sweet savour in them that are lost, as well as those who are saved. All things were created by God, even the wicked for the day of evil. Christ, by his interposition, will render all things, even those in their nature unfriendly, subservient to this great end.

9. Some have urged this passage in John xii. 32. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." But these words may be referred to that state of the world, in which all, who shall then be, shall know the Lord; when the people of all

nations shall, by the spirit, be drawn to Christ, and religion become universal.

Supposing that this is not, (as perhaps it is not) the meaning of our Saviour; yet the word *all* does, in no measure, always signify every individual. Dr. Watts in his logic, speaks of a particular and universal *all*. The word is often used in the Bible, to signify, in general, some of all nations or sects. Thus it is said, that "*all* Jerusalem and *all* Judea and the region round about Jordan, came to John and were baptized." See Matt. iii. 5, 6. So it is said, that "*all* men accounted John, that he was a prophet." Mark xi. 32. So it is said, that "*all* men came to Christ." John iii. 26, "*All* men seek after thee." Mark i. 37. The word *all* denotes nothing more, in these passages, than that the fact spoken of was a general thing.

The words used by Christ, when he said "that he would draw all men unto him," were spoken to certain Grecian proselytes, who, no doubt, felt interested in the salvation of their own nation, and the idea which would, under these circumstances, naturally be taken by them, would be, that the effects of his death were not to be confined to the Jews, but to become universal.

10. Another passage urged by some in favor of universal salvation, especially the doctrine that the future world will be a place of mercy and repentance, is in 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Quickened in spirit, by which he went and preached to the spirits in prison." The time here referred to, is the days of Noah. The text by no means holds up the idea, that they were spirits in prison, at the time they were preached to, or that Christ preached to them *only* by his spirit. They are spoken of as spirits in prison, at the time when Peter wrote. So that the passage, thus applied, is wholly perverted. But supposing all was granted that is contended

for, with respect to this passage, still it does not hold up the idea that one of them was converted.

11. Some bring passages which describe the universal spread of religion in the millennial state; such as follow: "All shall know the Lord from the greatest to the least. All the ends of the earth shall see his salvation. No more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord." But these passages respect only the state of religion, during the reign of Christ for a thousand years.

12. Some have urged the passages in Rom. viii. 19. and onwards; "The creature was made subject to vanity not willingly.—The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, &c."

The word here rendered *creature*, is the same that is also rendered creation. It but seldom signifies rational part only. Indeed, rational creation cannot be referred to here: It cannot mean *christians*: They are spoken of as distinct. He says, even we ourselves groan within ourselves. It is for the redemption of the elect, that the creature is made subject to vanity. It cannot mean, that impenitent sinners are unwillingly subject to vanity. They roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues.—The expression is figurative. It meant the good things of this life; our food, raiment, drink, &c.—The Scripture represents all nature as uniting in the praise of God, and invites all rational beings to join in his praise. So that they are, speaking figuratively, unwilling to be improved in the gratification of lusts. Our beasts are improved to serve Satan. So that the whole creation, as it were, groans under the abuse. The reason why God has given these things to sinners, is to accomplish the work of redemption.—The time is coming, when they are to be delivered from the bondage of corruption; when they shall

be improved to the glory of God, and holiness to the Lord shall be inscribed on pots and on the bells of horses.

The words, therefore, which we are considering, must be strangely perverted, when viewed as holding up universal salvation.

13. Another passage is in Rom. v. 18. "Even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." This passage is employed to establish the point, that all men are to be justified.——Any who would, with candor, attend to the epistle to the Romans, must think such a sentiment perfectly inconsistent with the drift of the epistle.—A gift is the act of the giver, and not of the receiver. It is not necessary that a gift should be received, in order to constitute it a gift. The passage holds up a universal, free offer of salvation, and the reason why any are not justified, is their rejection of the offer.

14. The last argument in favor of universal salvation which I shall notice, is that drawn from the words of Peter, in Acts iii. 21. "Until the times of the restitution, which God hath spoken of, by the mouth of all the prophets, &c." By restitution of all things, they would understand, that men are to be restored to a state of holiness.——But the words will most naturally admit of being translated, "the times of the *accomplishment* of all things spoken of by the prophets." Being thus read, they do not at all favor universal salvation.

If any, however, should not like this reading of the text, it cannot mean, in a literal sense, that all things are to be restored to their primitive state; for this world is to be burnt up. So that it cannot mean, necessarily, that all mankind are to be restored to a state of holiness and happiness.—If the reading which I have given, is not agreeable to the spirit of the text, then the meaning must be,

a restitution of all things from the disorder and confusion, into which they were sunk by sin. Things are now evidently in a disordered state. Virtue is unrewarded: Vice is unpunished, and wickedness triumphs. The meaning is, that things will be set right. The righteous will be received to glory: The wicked doomed to endless sufferings, and every thing rendered subservient to the praise and glory of God.

Thus I have taken notice of those things which appear to be worthy of it, and if my remarks are just, they, I trust, will serve as an answer to any others that may be brought.

Improvement.

1. From what has been said on the doctrine of endless punishment, and what is urged against it, we may be led to conjecture, what is the source of the prevalence of the doctrine of universal salvation. It is greatly to be feared, in regard to some, that it originates from strong delusion and judicial blindness. Many of those who embrace this sentiment, have had great light: Others, not willing to come to the light, shut their eyes against it. This shows what stupid creatures men are, to flatter their own souls, and shut their eyes to the dreadful pit, when it is so fatal.

2. We see how solemnly dreadful a part those act, who are trying to persuade sinners, that they shall *not die eternally*, though they indulge themselves in sin. Such teachers must share an awful condemnation. The blood of souls will be found in their skirts.—Such a wrong belief, continued in, will likely prove fatal. When any are awakened, it is in a view of future, endless punishment. Let a sinner, under solemn impressions, be brought to embrace delusive notions respecting future punishment, and immediately his attention and concern of mind are at end.

3. We see, if we have had a just view of the future state of sinners, that continuance in their sins is dangerous. A Christless state is an amazingly dreadful state. No language can describe, or thought fathom it. If we had a proper sense of its dreadful nature, it would overwhelm us. If we could be brought to view it, we should acknowledge it to be the most dreadful sight which we ever beheld. We should not be able to refrain from crying out, what madness, O sinner, dost thou possess! Hell is but just before thee. Oh, be intreated to awake up out of sleep, and escape from the fire that never shall be quenched, and the worm that never shall die.

4. We see, and may, in this view, account for the attention which God pays to the recovery of sinners; that Christ should have preached as he did, and wept over Jerusalem; that he should now be standing at sinners' doors, and sending out his ministers to cry aloud to them and spare not.

5. The conversion of a soul is a great thing: It causes joy in heaven among the holy angels: And if we were to spend a life in anguish, to convert one soul, how little would it be!——How ought parents to strive with their children! How ought christians and ministers to be faithful to the souls of men!

DISCOURSE XXV.

ACTS XX. 28.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock.

THE great Apostle, in this visit which he made to the churches, seems to be assured, that it

was the last that he should ever make. "And now," says he "behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone, preaching the gospel, shall see my face no more." He seems therefore, to exercise a most tender, benevolent concern for their welfare, and manifests a determination to clear his garments of their blood. He appears to have the great day of accounts, in a most lively manner, in view.—Among other solemn addresses, is this to the Ephesian Elders; in which he solemnly points out their duty in many particulars: He urges his own example; that he had not shunned to declare the council of God; that he had kept nothing back, that might be profitable; pressing on them repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and even now he was pursuing the Divine call to bonds, if not death. "But," says he, "none of these things move me." He then presses on them the faithful discharge of the duties of their office. "Take heed to *yourselves*." Be very watchful how you live. Whatever you neglect, do not neglect your own souls. See to it, how you live. This he no doubt, *presses*, in order that their preaching might be attended with a probable prospect of success.

"Take heed also to all the flock." You have a solemn work and charge. You watch for souls, as those that must give account, as those who have under their care the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. Take heed therefore; this cause and interest, this flock of which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, is dear to Christ. It will therefore be highly displeasing if you are unfaithful.

What I propose, is

I. To make a few observations on the duty and office of an elder in the church.

II. Enquire what is here meant by flock, of which the Ephesian elders had the charge and oversight.

III. Point out the manner in which elders are to exercise their oversight, and feed the flock of God, or perform the work of an elder.

I. I am to make a few remarks respecting the office of an elder.

1. This is a general name for ministers of the word, or those that minister in holy things. There are, according to the Apostle, three great branches of ministerial work; teaching, exhortation and ruling. The Apostle's words are, "He that teacheth on teaching, and let the elder that rules well, be counted worthy of double honor."—— Some have supposed that the different names for the ministers of the word, were designed to point out a subordination of officers in the church.—— That men were set apart for the exercise of different gifts; and that, in many gospel churches, there were more teachers than one, I have no doubt. But these different names were, I conceive, in no measure, designed to point out a distinction, or subordination. These different names are applied to the same persons. Thus in our text, the Apostle says to the Ephesian Elders, "take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers or bishops."—— They were directed to feed the flock as pastors. A *pastor* signifies one that feeds. So that it is easy to see, that the Apostle, in pointing out the qualifications of an Elder, uses the words, *Elder* and *Bishop*, as synonymous.

2. An Elder was one chosen by the church.—— The Apostle considers, that the church had a right to choose their own officers. "Choose ye out seven men, &c."——The same is pretty evident from these expressions, "when they had or-

daimed them Elders," which properly signifies choosing or appointing by suffrage.

3. An Elder, according to Gospel order, is consecrated, or introduced into office by the Presbytery, or Elders.——It is objected, that to allow the right of ordaining to Elders, is giving them too much power. In my view, there is no more power in a Presbytery's ordaining a man, called by a church, than in baptism, or any other part of office work.

4. An Elder is one, set apart, either to the exercise of all those gifts, teaching, exhortation, and ruling, or to some one. When a man takes on him alone to attend on the ministry of the word, he engages in the exercise of these different gifts: But, as I said before, it appears evident, that there were more than one in many, if not all the primitive churches.

I now pass

II. To enquire what is here meant by *flock*, of which the Ephesian Elders had the charge and oversight.——It is clear that it had special reference to the church. So that in the Gospel sense, there cannot be an Elder or Pastor, without a church.——I have no doubt, that with many, there have been extremes in respect to ministerial charge. Some make no distinction between church and congregation. Others have seemed to feel, as if the congregation were hardly, if at all, to be consulted.——An Elder is to be of good report of them that are without.——It is true that he is a church officer, yet his work, in regard tothose without, is solemn.

I pass

III. To point out the manner in which Elders are to exercise their oversight, and feed the flock of God.

1. It has been observed, that one part of the ministerial work is to teach the gospel. It is the duty of a minister to explain and open the scriptures: He should explain not merely some parts, but should be able to say, "I have not shunned to declare the *whole* counsel of God: I have kept back nothing which would be profitable." It is to be feared, that some of little understanding in the doctrines of the gospel, rush uncalled into the work: They may have a gift of exhortation, but be unqualified in every other respect.—It is true, there is wisdom to be used, in adapting and timing discourses, and in introducing doctrines; but all scripture is profitable, and a Pastor ought to be able to feed the flock with the whole counsel of God.

It is important to hold up the Divine character; the obligation of creatures; the evil of sin; universal, total depravity; the necessity of special grace; the creature's impotence and perfect unworthiness. He is to show the creature to be cut off, as to his own doings: He is to unfold the doctrines of grace in justification and effectual calling, and the nature of true holiness: He is to draw the distinguishing character of the good man, and is to hold up and apply the promises and threatnings of the word of God.——He is also not only to feed with the word, but with the ordinances.

2. Another part of the ministerial work, is exhortation or application—and *that* both to saints and sinners.—It is not sufficient merely to hold up depravity, and prove a future state of rewards and punishments; but to apply these truths to the *consciences* of sinners, and use means to gain their attention to them.—In feeding the flock, it is not sufficient merely, that the most entertaining truths be demonstrated; but the seed of the word must

be watered.—Exhortation is a profitable gift in the church. This is to be attended to, both in public and private: And especially it is important to exhort, by our life and daily walk.

3. Another essential branch of the duty of an elder, is ruling, or leading in the discipline of the church.——On the discharge of this duty, the welfare of a church greatly depends, and in Scripture, it is treated as a useful and important gift in the church.——In regard to some, they lie still, while the church, like the vineyard of the sluggard, is overrun with the weeds of heresy, discord and every hurtful practice.——Others are harsh, and their government tends to scatter the flock.

I pass to the

IV. Thing, which was to consider the great importance of a faithful discharge of the office and duty of an elder.

1. It is important in relation to the peace of his own soul. A faithful discharge or neglect of duty in a minister, would be a most essential thing in the judgment passed upon his character, at the tribunal of Christ. As a motive to fidelity, the Apostle says, "in so doing, thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee."

2. A faithful discharge of duty is important, as Christ requires this of ministers. He requires that they "preach, rebuke and exhort."——As they profess to be devoted to his cause, and engaged in his service, they are, in a peculiar sense, under his authority, and have reason to be solicitous lest by unfaithfulness, they show a disregard to his authority.

3. It is important, as much depends on faithfulness in winning souls—in being instrumental in the conversion of sinners unto God. If preach-

ers of the gospel neglect closely to hold up truth, especially, if they *pervert* the gospel, it tends to lull sinners, and their blood will be found in the skirts of such. It is a very bad sign to have ministers live so conformed to this world, as they often do. It is of vast importance to the prevalence of religion, that ministers should feel engaged. If their discourses are dry and lifeless, dull and empty, professors are apt to grow dull—and where this is the case, religion will be in a low state. But where the gospel is faithfully preached, and clearly held up, it generally has a visible effect, to the glory of God and the good of souls.

4. It is important that they should be faithful, as Christ's cause and church are dear to him. As the Apostle observes, "he purchased his church with his own blood." He therefore sets a great value upon it, and would have them faithfully attend to it. No doubt, unfaithful pastors will fall under the weight of Christ's displeasure.

5. It is a solemn affair to act well the part of a pastor, as we shall have to meet our people at Christ's tribunal, and give an account of every part of our ministry. All our sermons will then be examined, as well as all our exhortations. It will appear how we have treated with sinners under concern, and how we have governed in the church.

Improvement.

The subject opens a wide field of reflection. I would observe only in general, that is a great thing to take the charge of Christ's flock. It is a great and glorious work. A minister, of all men, need to live by faith.

It is a great thing to have a minister, and discharge the duty of a church and people.

I would ask the indulgence of this audience, while, in a few words, I address myself to the can-

didate about to enter on the solemn work of the ministry.

Dear Sir,

After a few moments, you are to receive the solemn and weighty charge of a bishop of souls and a minister of the great Redeemer. I can say in sincerity, that it affords me sensible pleasure, that Providence has opened a door for your labors in this part of the vineyard of Christ; where there is peculiar need of bold, able and faithful defenders of the gospel of our common Redeemer. I trust the great head of the church has furnished you, in some good degree, for this great work; yet you will indulge me in the freedom of applying a few solemn truths, which are naturally suggested by the subject we have considered.—The work on which you are entering, is a great work; too great for an angel in his own strength. In one view, there are great discouragements attending the work. It is a time in which ministers meet with great opposition and trial. But we have a faithful Lord and Master, who will reward you, should you be the happy instrument of converting souls.——The spiritual and eternal welfare of this flock much depends on your ministry. You will have to deal with many, who are not friendly to the gospel of Christ. You are to expect trials of your faithfulness. Indeed, you are not to please yourself with great, worldly prospects. You may expect many trying things from the world, and will doubtless experience ingratitude and opposition. It will be well for you to look for your reward, from another quarter. If you are faithful, there is hope that you may be successful, and at last receive the approbation of your God and Redeemer, and a crown of glory, which will be of infinitely more importance than the honors and riches of the world.

Under a proper view of the work, you will at once, see yourself wholly insufficient without Divine strength. The most studied, pathetic address will be of but little effect, without the power of God. After all your study, you have need to be a man of prayer. Commend your sermons to God, and daily bear the case of your hearers before the throne of grace.——You will be under temptations to keep back the truths of the gospel. A smooth address will best suit many, even of the most distinguished and influential characters.—— This is the way to gain what may be thought the most honorable notice and worldly affluence. But remember the consequence. Such honors and riches are too dearly bought. See to it then, that you preach the plain, simple truths of the gospel. See that you do it in a manner best adapted to awaken the consciences of your hearers. It is important that you speak feelingly, and that you let your life constantly enforce religion on your hearers. It is a great thing to be an ambassador of Christ, to be an instrument in promoting his kingdom, and at last to be crowned with glory. Let these considerations urge you to fidelity: Let the salvation of the souls of your hearers, and the honor of the head of the church be your great object through life, and you shall, at last receive the approbation of the Mighty Judge, before the assembled universe.

I shall conclude with addressing a few words to the church and congregation in this place. I congratulate you, my friends, on the pleasing prospect presented to you this day; a day, in which God seems to be returning to you in mercy. You have for a long time, been destitute of the stated administration of the word and ordinances; but God seems to be presenting you one of the ascention gifts of the Redeemer. If rightly improved, it

will be to you a great blessing: If, on the other hand, it be misimproved, the greatness of the blessing will only aggravate your condemnation. Take heed, therefore, how you hear, and how you improve the blessing presented to you. The person who is now to be ordained over you, is entitled to your fervent, daily prayers. If God enriches him with peculiar grace and gifts, it will be for your good. The business of a minister is a great and laborious work, attended often with peculiar trials and discouragements.——You are under obligation to encourage and support him. If he should be discouraged, or indeed, diverted from the work, for want of your kind support and encouragement the evil will fall with double weight on you. May the God of all grace dispose you to be faithful, that you may inherit the blessings of his grace.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

PSALM XIII. 1.

How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? Forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

IT is an unquestionable truth, that the children of God are often called to walk through great darkness and hidings. This they find to be a state of great distress. Therefore it is, that we find many things in the Bible, adapted to such a state.—This was evidently the state of David when he

penned this psalm. He felt his soul shut off from God: He felt as though he was cut off, and God had forgotten him. Indeed, there are a number of his psalms, adapted to such a state. "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" It seems that the source of his distress was, that he was deprived of the smiles of God's face and the light of his countenance.

The doctrine which I draw from the text, is, that God sometimes withdraws his wonted smiles, and hides his face from his people, to their great distress.

I. I would explain the doctrine.

II. Consider when, and how God may be said to withdraw his wonted smiles, and hide his face from his people.

III. For what reasons, or on what account, God often does it.

IV. How the people of God ought to conduct under such a situation.

V. Show that this is a heavy scourge, and deeply affecting to the people of God.

I. I would explain the doctrine.

1. By God's withdrawing his wonted smiles, I do not mean the spirit in its sanctifying operations. It is true that God often withdraws the influence of the spirit in its sanctifying operations, or men's hearts may be drawn away from God, and he withdraw the grace of faith, repentance, love, &c. But this is not what I mean, nor what I conceive David meant. There is a wide difference between sanctifying and comforting influences. The first leads us to comply with duty; the last denotes the enjoyment, which the soul has in God. The fruit in the one case, is duty; in the other, happiness. God, it is true, often leaves to great stupidity and deadness, and in this sense, withdraws: But what I mean is, that God

withholds communion and the light of his countenance. Darkness in this case, is not our sin, though we may provoke God to withhold by sin: But in the other case, darkness is our sin.

2. Though God may withdraw sensible manifestations for a time; yet he never takes away his loving kindness wholly. When the soul has these manifestations made, this is what the scripture calls the earnest of the spirit. God withholds manifestations only as a frown, or chastisement: But though God for a time, afford no sensible manifestation, yet it is not a final withdrawment, in regard to any.

3. God may withhold his smiles in very different degrees. Some may be destitute of any sensible manifestations, so that the soul is overwhelmed. This was the case with David, when he says, "will the Lord cast off forever?" Others have not those affecting views: As they do not enjoy those sensible manifestations, neither do they experience that dreadful degree of darknes.

4. This darkness and these hidings may exist, when faith and love are in lively exercise, even to that degree that the soul knows that it longs after God. David expresses assurance of his love to God, and yet complains of darkness. "Will the Lord cast off?"

5. The children of God may not only experience the hidings of his face in this way; but may be the subjects of his frown, in his not affording his blessing to attend ordinances and religious opportunities, in leaving them to be beset with enemies, and his church involved in evils. Thus Gideon says, "if the Lord be with us, why is all this befallen us?"

II. I shall attempt to show when it may be said, that the Lord withdraws his wonted smiles.

1. We have already seen in some measure,

when this may be said to be the case ; when God withholds communion manifestations of his favor. In the enjoyment of these, the soul had a peace and serenity beyond the power of language to describe ; but when deprived of them, is under the horror of great darkness.

2. God may be said to withdraw from his people and church, when he does not appear for their help in times of great trial. Gideon reasoned justly in regard to the Jews, if God had not forsaken them, why should all that they met with, come upon them ? Why should they be left to so great oppressions by the Midianites ?——Often God withdraws, in leaving persons to great sufferings and temptations, and brings them very low.

3. God may be considered as withdrawing his wonted smiles, when the symbols of his presence are about to be removed. There were various symbols among the Jews before Christ ; such as the cloudy pillar, the urim and thummim and answers, special interpositions &c. Our Saviour in allusion to this, says, " behold your house is left unto you desolate." So it is when God is removing faithful, close, and soul-searching teachers, and sends those that daub with untempered mortar ; or threatens the removal of stated ordinances and worship.

4. When, though God may contiune stated ordinances and administrations, the Divine blessing does not accompany them, nor that power and quickening which has been wont to attend them, when the church is rent with schisms, and has few additions made to it.

5. When Christians are beset with untoward calamities, drought, blasts &c.—and do not seem to find relief.

6. When trials are not sanctified to those who experience them; when they do not have the kind effect to humble them and wean them from the world.

7. When Christians have not that nearness to God in prayer, and those sweet seasons of communion which they once experienced; when sermons and exhortations are not accompanied with weight; when God seems to shut out their prayers, and they are led to cry out, "O that I knew where I might find him?"

III. I proceed to enquire into the reason of God's hiding his face from his people.

1. Some have been ready to enquire, whether God does hide his face, when it is not meant for correction? I suppose never. God has promised that "if we draw nigh to him, he will draw nigh to us." That God may not withhold quickening influences, and sanctifying operations in a powerful degree, without any special act, by which the spirit is quenched, I do not pretend to deny. But that God should frown, when his children live near to him, seems not consistent. For a parent to correct an obedient child, would not be thought wise. So that God's withdrawing must always be considered as some rebuke.

2. But yet it is designed for good, to bring the person back to God. God continues the rod longer or shorter, according to the greatness of our departure. When we have got far away, God often holds the rod over us *long*.——When a child has been guilty of inadvertency, we give him, perhaps a frown; but when we see tears of sorrow, we soon open our arms in reconciliation. So God deals with his children. But when a child has been perverse, and run away, and dishonored his parent, and stood it out long in his obstinacy, the parent means to bring him down thoroughly, and

lets him, on his knees, plead again and again.—David committed a foul sin, and God let him long suffer rebuke: He let him come down on his knees, and cry long under sore trouble.

3. When the church and people of God grow remiss in brotherly watch and discipline; and unruly disorderly walkers are permitted to be in the church.

4. When professors become worldly minded, and are led away by the pomp and show of this world. In such a case, God is wont to rebuke.

5. When they are remiss in duties, and neglect secret prayer and religious meetings.

6. When there is a cold, formal performance of duties, and our prayers and exercises are but lip service.

IV. I proceed to consider the duties to be exercised in this situation.

It becomes us to feel our situation, and to have a sense of our sins, which are the procuring cause of every evil which befals us. Some seem to be so sunk and got away, that they have no proper sense of their misery. It is happy in regard to one that has got away from God, when he begins to cry out, under a sense of his distress, "will the Lord cast off forever?" And feels as though he could not live without God.

It is the duty of one in this situation, to lie low, to bow and submit to God, and feel that God is wholly just.——The way for a child that has been perverse, to be restored to the favor of the parent, is to come down on his knees, to confess and humble himself.——This was the way in which David found pardon.

Under a sense how dreadful it is to be shut away from God, we ought to cry *heartily* and *incessantly* to God. So David and so Job cried.

Nay, I would add, we should cry again and again, and try to be still more abased.

We should also break off from those courses which might provoke God to withdraw, and labor after thorough resolutions to guard against them in future. The design of God in his dealings with us, is to embitter sin and make us more watchful. In this situation, it might be of use to renew our covenant with God and lay ourselves under all possible restraints. We are not to be discouraged, though God may not immediately hear us. God loves to have us engaged. We are to persevere in the use of all means. We are, like the spouse in the Canticles, to seek him in the streets and broadways of ordinances: We are to enquire of Christ's faithful watchmen, and submit to strokesof close reproof.

V. I proceed to enquire in what respects God's hidings are matter of deep exercise and mourning to his children.

1. Because they are deprived of all their joys and comforts. God's favor to them is life, and his loving kindness better than life. There is an incomparable sweetness in God's presence. It is what the soul, when deprived of, greatly longs after.

2. Because God's rebuke to the soul is very affecting: His hiding, as a token of displeasure, is most cutting. This, I conceive, constituted the weight of Christ's sufferings. The Christian, in a state of sensibility, experiences a horror of soul, and feels as though he could not live.

3. It is often accompanied with great deadness and of course, distress: Corruptions seem to prevail, and the world to creep in. God's children feel such a dreadful chill, that they are overwhelmed: The world is spoilt to them, and their

God has forsaken them; so that they are, many times, crazed with the pangs of death and hell.

4. They do not experience their accustomed comfort and sweetness in prayer, public and private, in reading and hearing the world, and in sacramental opportunities. They reflect, "O what delight I used to have in the closet, when I met God there! O that it were with me as in months past! O that I knew where I might find him!" They go to the closet, but do not find God; to ordinances, but he is not there.

5. Not only so; but they find great inability to perform duty, a want of fervor and the spirit of prayer. They have many vain thoughts and unbelief, and can scarcely raise a cry to God: They have many temptations and a thousand blasphemous suggestions, and feel as though hell was let loose.

6. Their sins come up, and they are made to possess the sins of their youth. All the sins of their lives seem to be presented before them.

7. Death appears terrible. They are, many times, ready to doubt whether they ever knew God. This is not a certain consequence of this kind of darkness; but frequently attends it. They used to think of death with a kind of pleasing prospect; but the subject does not look so to them now.—— Sometimes they feel the terrors of Sinai, as under a law-work.——On all these accounts it is a state of great distress; and we may see why David cries out as he does, and pleads for restoration, as also Job and many others.

Improvement.

1. It must, at present, be an awfully low time with professors, as there are so few complaints of desertions. There is reason to fear, that a great part are but nominal Christians.

2. There is no reason of discouragement because we are encompassed with darkness. We may address our souls in this language. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul." When the soul feels as though it could not live without God, such a feeling may afford some evidence that God is our portion. But if we do not enjoy God's presence, and yet are not troubled at this, there is great reason to fear that we have never taken God as our portion.

3. How dreadful is the state of those who never knew any thing but separation from God—from whom, God, in every sense withdraws the spirit's operation!

4. We may be led to try ourselves. Are our sins our greatest burthen? Do we long for the return of the light of God's countenance?

5. We learn how much we should dread sin, and what motives there are to watchfulness.—Does sin cost the children of God so much anguish and distress; how then ought they to guard against it!

6. If God so severely rebukes sin in his own children, what may not Christless sinners expect!

DISCOURSE XXVII.

ACTS IX. 3. 4. 5. 6.

And as he journied he came near Damascus, &c.

WE have in this chapter, a brief history of the conversion of Paul. He was a very striking instance of enmity and rage against Christ and his

cause, and in his conversion, there was as wonderful a display of Divine grace.—There are, often, instances of conversion, in which the special power and grace of God do not so visibly and strikingly appear: But he was overtaken in his full career of malice and opposition to Christ.—Having destroyed or dispersed a great part of the Christians in Judea, he had solicited letters or a kind of commission from the Sanhedrim, to go to Damascus and drag away to trial, all who embraced Christianity. Though Damascus was a chief city of Syria; yet it was inhabited by many Jews, and the gospel had been preached there. That there were many Jews at Damascus, is evident from Josephus, who tells us that eighteen thousand of them with their wives and children were massacred at one time: At another, ten thousand in an hour. Saul, as appears by our text, had approached very near Damascus, and was just ready to enter on his purpose, when God, in a marvellous manner, arrested his career and saved his people from his rage. There was something wonderful in the means of his conviction. There was a wonderful power which operated on him and those who were with him, so that they fell at once to the earth. There was a wonderful light that was very visible, and far surpassed the noon-day sun. Dr. Doddridge supposes this to be the shechinah, or glory, that appeared, and was wont to fill the temple, as a symbol of the Divine presence; and that, as the Apostle had been trained up there, he knew what it meant, and therefore cried out, "who art thou, Lord:" He also heard a voice, the voice of Christ, speaking to him probably with great power, so that trembled: He not only heard Christ's voice, but saw him bodily, as really as any of the Apostles. Therefore Ananias says, "the Lord, even Jesus that appeared to

thee in the way &c." To this the Apostle alludes when he says, "last of all seen of me also, as one born out of due time."——These means are accompanied with such a power, that truth sunk with weight on his conscience. His convictions of conscience were probably short, but very powerful. It seems, from the relation which he gives of himself, that he had a most striking view of the malignity of his heart. When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. It wrought in him all manner of concupiscence: He had been alive without the law, and had thought that he loved God and his law: But he now felt the most dreadful opposition to God, and saw himself wholly lost. It was, no doubt, from this view of himself, that he trembled and was so perfectly overcome.

There appear to be different views relative to the question how long his conviction lasted, and when he was converted. Some suppose that he was not converted, till Ananias came to him, and the scales fell from his eyes: But to me, it is evident it was before this time. God told Ananias before he went, that "he need not fear him, for behold he prayeth." Indeed, I consider that he was converted when he saw Christ, and that the words uttered by him, "Lord what wouldest thou have me to do?" are some evidence of it, as also the disposition which he shewed to comply with Christ's direction. It was a wonderful change which he experienced. He had, as he expresses it, been exceedingly mad against Christians: But he now turned directly about, and at the risk of every thing, preached that faith which so lately he had destroyed. He could now give up every thing and follow Christ.

I propose to consider

I. The state out of which sinners are called by the power of God.

II. The awakening and conviction which they experience.

III. Their conversion.

I. I shall consider the state out of which sinners are called by Divine power.

1. It is a state of entire estrangement from God. Sinners are wholly alienated in their minds from the glory of God, and perfectly blind to the beauty of holiness. The Apostle, no doubt, wondered that he had not before seen something of that Divine beauty which he now saw in Christ.—So it is generally with others: When renewed in their souls, they see a glory and beauty in things which they saw not before. The earth appears full of Divine glory; and more especially does God's word appear thus. But naturally they see none; it is all perfect darkness.

2. It is a state of enmity. Impenitent sinners not only see no beauty, but have hearts entirely opposed. The Apostle represents himself as exceedingly mad, as filled with enmity and rage against Christ. He wanted to spill the blood of every Christian. Not content with distressing the Christians in Judea, he persecuted them even to strange cities.——This is a picture of the natural heart.

3. Therefore the difficulty is seated in the heart or will, and is of a moral nature. Depravity, no doubt, greatly darkens the understanding and conscience; but is originally seated in the heart.

4. Hence, there was such surprizing ignorance and stupidity in the Apostle. He walked, he tells us, in all good conscience, and verily thought in his opposition, that he did God service. He was alive as to his hopes and expectations: And so there are thousands at this day, that are violently opposing God and the gospel; who think, notwithstanding, that they are friends to religion, while

they put light for darkness, and darkness for light. This is the ground of the necessity of a work of conviction. As grace only gives a holy taste, so it is necessary that the creature should see whence his help comes; that he should have truth objectively held up to the view of his mind, in order to exercise saving graces.

II. I shall make some observations on awakenings and convictions of conscience in the Apostle and others.

1. This may be considered a work preparatory to regeneration. There is more reason to hope in regard to one awakened, than with regard to one unawakened. I would not say that he is, in a moral view, to be considered in a more favorable light; for as light and conviction increase, so does opposition. The law work, therefore, which we are considering, is a natural, not a moral fitness and preparation.

2. God has various means by which truth is applied to the conscience of the sinner, and he is led to see his native opposition of heart to God. The law, or the Bible system, is the grand instrument. If sinners would only let this come home to them, it would serve as a glass, in which they might clearly see the state of their hearts. But there is in sinners, such a disposition to shut their eyes, that nothing but special influence will lead them to look into the glass of the Divine law.—God therefore makes use of various means and instruments to fasten truth on the conscience.—Very extraordinary means were used with regard to the Apostle Paul. I take it that something more than the influence of the light, made Paul and those with him fall to the earth. There was the glory of the light, and the voice of Christ, accompanied with wonderful power. So it was at

the day of Penticost, and so with respect to the Jailor. God works by various ways; sometimes he accompanies afflictions and bereavements with his blessing; sometimes solemn deaths are instrumental in awakening attention; and at other times, the faithful endeavors of parents, and Christians, and the administration of the word are succeeded.

3. This work often begins with terror and fears of hell. This is properly no part of conversion; yet may be a mean of exciting the attention. God, by degrees, lets light into the conscience, and leads sinners to a clear view of the opposition and malignity of their hearts, and the pressing danger in which they are, of sinking into hell. When they come to have truth deeply impressed upon them, they see that they never shall turn, without Divine power; that it would be perfectly just in God to send them to hell: They perceive, that their hearts are no more reconciled in consequence of their convictions, and that the difficulty lies in their perverse temper.——It is often the case that Satan has various stratagems.——Thus when a sinner becomes convinced of his past sinful life, and is led to amend his conduct as to many external things, Satan is ever ready at hand to tempt him to make a righteousness of such external reformation.——Others he tries to drive to despair; and many, that God begins with, are, through his devices, soon persuaded to turn back.

4. The sovereignty of God is displayed in this work, as well as in conversion. It is displayed as to subjects and means. It is displayed with respect to the length of time that conviction continues. The time was short with Paul, and so also with the Jailor. With others it continues for months; and possibly, in some instances, for years. God's sovereignty is displayed also with respect

to the degree. Some are much more purged than others; though still, it is a work which adults universally pass through, in a greater or less degree. There is in all who become Christians, a necessity of this law work, in order to the reception of saving grace, and to prepare the soul to admire its excellency.——I come now to the

III. And last thing, which was, to consider the Apostles experience, as also that of others relative to the change of conversion.——Those who suppose that conversion is effected by the same kind of influence with conviction, are much mistaken.——Conversion is affected by regeneration, or the operation of the power of God, implanting a new and Divine life in the soul. Regeneration is the Divine operation on the soul, and conversion is the actings of the soul toward God. Thus Christ who met Saul, implanted a new temper; on all his conviction would never have disposed him to embrace Christianity. As in conviction, so in the work of conversion, God acts as a sovereign, as to subjects, as to time, and as to measures of grace imparted. Some have, at once, high and lively prospects. Others have what is more like the dawning light, which but just appears at first.

In this work, sinners turn directly about. They see a glory in that which they hated, and the justice, purity and holiness of God shine with transporting lustre. The world appears new, and they discover new beauties in the word of God. Sin appears in a different light from what it ever did before. There appears an infinite glory and lustre in the character of God, and a beauty and sweetness in moral truth. The law of God appears to be holy, just and good. It was so with the Apostle. He who lately vented his rage against Christians, now viewed their cause so precious, that he would cheerfully die in its support.

The change which is effected in conversion, is undoubtedly a great change. Grace may at first be implanted in a low degree; yet things will appear, after conversion exceedingly different from what they did before.

Improvement.

1. We see the nature of the difficulty which bars the sinner from life. There is no want of a capacity. It is alienation of heart from God.—This constitutes the impotence and blindness.

2. The sinner has no excuse for neglect of repentance and compliance with the gospel, though nothing but special grace will subject the heart: It is sin and unreasonable opposition which make that grace necessary.

3. How dreadful is the state of the sinner! He flatters himself that he enjoys security. It is true that he does feel thus secure, but it flows all from enmity. His very duties (as he esteems them) are sin. Indeed, however he may flatter himself, there is not the least hope of his return without sovereign mercy.

4. Though sinners do nothing that is compliance with God's commands, and all their conduct while in an unregenerate state, flows from a selfish, wicked spirit; yet, as God deals with men as rational creatures, strict attention to means is of great importance.

5. We may be led to examine ourselves, whether we have ever experienced this change. Many, no doubt, are deceived, and there is danger that we may take conviction for conversion.

DISCOURSE XXVIII.

REV. III. 10.

I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world.

THE book of Revelations presents us with a view of the state of the church and world, for a period of at least, three thousand years; and is interspersed with solemn warnings, instructions and admonitions, suited to the different periods. In order properly to apply the warnings, it is of importance to labor to understand the application of the predictions.——We are first presented with a view of things as they then were; we are presented with a view of the seven churches of Asia, with suitable reproofs and warnings, on account of their back-slidings. The things that were to be hereafter, come next in order, and are divided into seven periods by the opening of the seven seals. The seventh seal is subdivided into seven periods by the seven trumpets, and the seven trumpets subdivided into seven periods by the seven vials. These periods respect the whole of the time from the vision of John to the end of the world. So that for nearly two thousand years, there has been no period of the church and world, in which some of the prophecies of this book have not had their accomplishment. The time of the six first periods brings us down not quite three hundred years. It gives us a view of the spread of the gospel and of the triumphs of grace, and also of the persecutions of

the church, till the downfall of the heathenish empire. It also gives us a view of the decline of religion, which made way for the scene that followed. There is, under the six first seals, an intimation of the cry of the martyrs to God to avenge their blood. The first trumpet gives a view of the vengeance and great wrath that was poured out on the power that had persecuted the church. This was a righteous and heavy judgment. The empire was invaded, plundered, and depopulated. The destruction was great, as historians tell us. The most populous parts of Italy were so thinned of inhabitants as to become a forest.——The next trumpet gives a view of the state of the empire and government, under the emblem of a star that fell from heaven. This opened the bottomless pit, and there came out a smoke, probably representing the mist of ignorance—and out of the smoke, locusts which are supposed to represent the Romish hierarchy. This is supposed to be introductory to the dreadful scene of delusion, of which this book gives a striking view, and which, with all its evils and consequences, is, no doubt, the hour of temptation to which Christ refers, in his address and warning to the church of Philadelphia. By the hour of temptation is not meant any definite period, but one which has been, and in its final issue, will be of long duration. I understand it to mean, a season peculiarly suited to delusion, in which men are exceedingly exposed to be carried away.

I propose to consider

I. When the hour of temptation did, or will take place.

II. The propriety of its being said to come on all the world.

III. Some things which greatly expose to this hour of temptation.

IV. In what situation we may hope to be kept from the hour of temptation.

V. The dreadful consequences of being overtaken by it.

I. I shall consider when the hour of temptation did, or will take place, and the nature of the temptation. The epistles to the churches were introductory to what was about to be unfolded, and the events disclosed lead directly to that scene of error, blindness, and blasphemy which has been taking place. It seems to be the design of the spirit of prophecy to hold up and unfold two great scenes; the reign of sin and Satan, and that of the Redeemer which is to follow.——As this hour of temptation is the most dreadful hour that ever has been, no doubt he alludes to it. It began, in some degree, at that time. At least there were some dawnings of it. The Apostle Paul, who wrote sometime before, says, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." The church began to be in a state, in which the members were greatly exposed to temptation, and in great danger of being overcome by it. This hour of temptation was to be of long continuance, after the establishment of Anti-Christ's kingdom, which was to be with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, and was to last twelve hundred and sixty years.——We are probably in, and entering on the most dreadful hour of temptation. Some are indeed flattering themselves that Satan is ready to be bound, and the happy days dawning. I trust that things are hastening on to this state: But it is likely that the most dreadful scene is yet to come. I have not always thought so; but I am now confirmed in it. The scripture represents, that as Satan sees his time to be drawing to a close, the more he will rage.——Besides, the power of God will shine with peculiar lustre, and the church be prepared

for such a rest, by its being immediately preceded by a most dreadful state of darkness and blasphemy. We may suppose the darkest time therefore coming on.——Some may be ready to ask, why, since the kingdom of the beast has rather appeared, of late, to be falling, there should not be a period to the dark state? It is true that the power of the beast has been greatly diminished, tho' not altogether destroyed. But I know not that we have ground to suppose, that the reign of Satan is to end with the reign of the beast. Daniel evidently had a view of this same beast, which was, according to his account, to continue for a time, times, and the dividing of time, which is the same period as forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty two days: Yet when he anxiously enquires, as to the end of the days, there is a period added to the reign of the beast. This is agreeable to John's representation, who saw towards the close of Satan's reign, three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and of the false prophet, and go forth to the kings of the earth, to gather them together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.——But hereafter, things will be different. In the establishment of the kingdom of the beast, Satan pretended externally to own Christ. But we may expect hereafter, that he will rally in more direct opposition to Christ, and to promote infidelity and atheism. So that it may with propriety be called "the battle of the great day of God Almighty." The controversy will be more immediately between God and Satan with his instruments. God is about to display his triumph in what will soon follow that fearful ruin and slaughter, when the fowls of heaven will be gathered to the great supper.

Great and dreadful events are, no doubt, crowding on. Those who may live but a few years, will most likely see such a scene as never has been in this world. It has already been dreadful. Infidelity and atheism lift their heads in such a manner, as they never have, since man was on earth. The day is hastening, I believe, when those who own religion and Christ, will not be opposed to each other, as heretofore. But the opposition will be between believers and those who oppose and deny Christ.

It may be enquired, in what respects it is now, and has been the hour of temptation? It may be considered an hour of temptation, when the state of things is such, that the minds of men are greatly exposed to fatal error. Previous to the introduction of the abominations of the church of Rome, a great degree of superstition prevailed in the world. The preceding state of the church had been a day of miracles, and people listened with fondness to every *pretence* of miracles. There was early in the church, an idea of sanctity attached to a single life, as also a great fondness for pilgrimages and religious retirements. These things threw the world into a state, in which it was calculated to fall an easy prey to the designs of Satan and his instruments. The coming of the man of sin was with all deceivableness of unrighteousnes.——The present is a day of temptation of this kind. There never was a day, in which men were so exposed to renounce religion in every form. It has been adayof great religious delusion. A spirit of liberty has been prevalent. Men, seeing that they have been imposed on,seem, (especially in countries where Popery or Mahometanism has prevailed and been established) prepared to be easily persuaded that there is nothing in religion

that it is all a cheat. There have been, as appears from good authority, subtle combinations formed in Europe against all the restraints of religion and morality. In the present state of the public mind, many are easily persuaded that the restraints of religion are incompatible with freedom. There are subtle Philosophers who treat infidelity and liberty as connected, and they blend them together in their writings. The present age is what Thomas Paine calls the age of reason; but it is an age suited to the prevalence of such delusion. Many, no doubt, have fallen in with the designs of the enemies of religion, merely from a regard to civil liberty. So that, in this view, it is a day of great temptation.

It is a day of temptation also, as it is a day of distress and slaughter. Millions have, in the present age, perished by executions and war; and war seems to be fast spreading, so that it looks like a temptation coming on all the world; which brings me to consider

II. The propriety of this temptation's being said to come on all the world.——The temptation was of great extent in the first stages of it. The Popish superstition and Mahometan imposture very early spread over the greater part of the civilized world. In the present age, temptation is greatly spreading. The minds of men are greatly unhinged as to religion. Some, though they do not directly deny, yet indirectly reject the idea of distinction between the righteous and the wicked. Atheism and infidelity appear to be prevailing in the nations of Europe in general, in Prussia, Germany, France and England. Every kind of art and subtlety is used to weaken the bonds of religion and morality. It is a time of spreading temptation, as to evil and distress. Europe, of late, is almost constantly engaged in bloody wars; and

these wars appear to extend their calamities into every part of the globe. Even our own country is not altogether free from threatening appearances. Great and bitter animosities and divisions exist among us, as well as in other nations; so that there is the appearance of great wrath, in a more universal sense, than ever has been known before.

III. I am to mention some things that greatly expose men to be overcome in the hour of temptation.

I have already mentioned that the state of the world, in former ages, was peculiarly calculated to favor Satan's temptations. The superstition of the church was such, that the members were peculiarly exposed to be led astray into all the errors of Popery. At the present day, the world is in a state peculiarly calculated to favor opposition to religion. The religion of a considerable part of Europe has been little more than false belief and superstition. So that when the subject of civil and religious liberty comes to be attended to, men are easily persuaded to think that all religions are alike, and intended only as instruments of arbitrary government. In such a state of things, such language as that which is said to have been used in France, is uttered with applause: "No Monarchy in heaven, or no Republicanism on earth." It is natural for men to go from one extreme to the other, and from experiencing oppression, to throw off reasonable restraint with it.

Another thing which I would notice, is, that civil and religious establishments have been blended. Of course, the philosophers of the present day easily connect religion and arbitrary government, and easily persuade men, that in order to be free, they must throw off all religion. Pieces avowedly written to advocate sentiments like these, are read with great avidity.

Another thing which renders the present, a day of great temptation, and which emboldens Satan to appear in direct opposition to Jehovah, is the surprizing ignorance with which the world has been overspread. The state of the world, for some years back, has been very unfavorable to free enquiry. Catholics, Heathens, Mahometans, and others have been accustomed to receive their religion wholly on tradition. When therefore, they open their eyes, their minds are not furnished with any evidence in favor of the religion in which they have been educated, and so they are easily led to believe that there is nothing in religion.

Further, it is a day of great temptation, as God seems in his righteous judgment, to be leaving men to strong delusion for their inattention to his word, that unerring rule of conduct. How just a judgment on parents who have neglected the religious education of their children, that they should see them renouncing all religion!—There is in most persons, surprizing ignorance on the subject of Christianity, and inattention to God's word. And God, in just judgment, is about to punish the world for these things.

IV. I enquire in what situation we may hope to be kept from being overcome in this hour of temptation.

1. In order to this, labor for a thorough establishment in the doctrines of the gospel and a thorough acquaintance with the evidences of Christianity. It is a device of Satan, that people should be led to think, that no other knowledge is necessary but spiritual. In this way, they are much exposed.——If we would wish to have our families kept, in this hour of temptation, from fatal error, we should teach and explain to them the evidence of religion, and lead them not to put im-

plicit faith in what they read, or hear, when it is altogether unsupported by evidence.

2. Endeavor to live in conformity to the word of God's patience, who has promised that if we obey him, we shall be kept in the hour of temptation. In this way, shall we obtain clear light and establishment. Then shall ye know that ye follow on to know the Lord. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

3. It is important that we look well to the evil to which we are exposed: God has forewarned us of our danger. Let us often look into God's word. This scene of darkness and infidelity is an accomplishment of what is there declared, and is therefore, an evidence of its Divine original. In this way we may obtain such an establishment, as to be kept in the hour of temptation.

V. I shall next notice the dreadful consequences of being overtaken in this fatal temptation.

1. The consequences are dreadful, as they respect the state of society here in this world. The prevalence of infidelity and licentiousness saps the foundation of human happiness.

2. But God is coming out in fearful judgments on this world—on all such as yield to Satan's device. He is coming out in battle array, against those who reject and despise Christ, and will, in a terrible manner, pour out his fury on those nations that have worshipped the beast.

Improvement.

1. We live in a day of dreadful, yet important events. In no age since the Apostles, was there ever greater evidence of the truth of God's word, and yet there was never one in which it was more rejected: Never was infidelity more unreasonable, while it thus prevails.

2. We see, while God is sending abroad desolating judgements, what reason we have to humble ourselves for our sins, and cry to him that he would avert such judgments from ourland.

We have reason for deep contrition, and to cry mightily to God to keep us from this hour of temptation. If I can understand the prophecies, the most dreadful scene is coming on the world, in the compass of a very few years. There will be great *destruction* as well as delusion. *You* are exposed: Your families also are exposed. Delusion is a very spreading contagion.——We may flatter ourselves that these cautions are unnecessary; that we are in no danger: But it is possible that we may feel a security, for which we have no *just* grounds.

3. How important is it, as a mean of security, to keep the word of Christ's patience, and to hold fast the doctrines of the gospel! How important that we observe the Divine institutions; that we be zealous to maintain Christian worship in its purity; the Sabbath and other ordinances, and the whole system of Statutes contained in the gospel! How important to instruct children and youth, and inculcate earnestly on *all* the great duties of religion!

DISCOURSE XXIX.

JOHN IV. 23.

But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth.

AS a great part of our time ought to be spent in the worship of God, and as he has an absolute right to dictate what kind of worship shall be paid

to him; so it is a matter of importance to determine the nature and exercises of that worship which he has prescribed in his word. This is especially important, when we consider the many mistakes which have always been made, with regard to this subject; when we consider also that much will-worship has been introduced, and the true worship of God grossly corrupted. The text is a part of our Saviour's discourse with the woman of Samaria. He goes to Jacob's well, no doubt, with a view to convert this poor woman. He introduces his instruction by asking for water to drink, and by the water, illustrates to her the nature and properties of grace; letting her know also, that he was a Divine person.

Doctrine—Spiritual worship is *that only*, which can be acceptable to God who is a spirit.

I. I shall make some observations on spiritual worship.

II. Show what are the external acts and exercises of worship, which God has pointed out in his word.

III. When more especially we are to devote time to the exercises of religious worship.

IV. Consider the end of the institution of external acts and exercises of worship.

V. The importance of steady attention to religious worship.

I. I shall make some observations on spiritual worship.

Spiritual worship is that worship which is by the spirit, or mind. The worship which the Samaritans pretended to yield, was merely *external* parade, and consisted in rites and ceremonies which were only bodily, and could not, therefore, be acceptable to God, who is a spirit.——A spirit is composed of understanding, will and affections.

1. Therefore, spiritual worship is an understanding, rational worship. There were many things in the worship of that day, as well as the present, that were only blind flights of passion, in many respects irrational. It would be absurd to suppose, that the Supreme Being is delighted with such imaginary flights and heats of the passions.——A spiritual worship is in a view of truth. There is a kind of zeal and light which truth tends to quench. But those affections which are the essence of worship, are in a view of the great truths that relate to the Deity and the atonement, and can exist only in a view of these truths. So that to worship in spirit, is to worship understandingly.

2. Spiritual worship most essentially consists in holy affections. Light in the understanding is no part of worship; yet is necessary to those affections, in which the essence of worship consists. Thus we find all the laws of God comprized in love to him, or charity. Love, in this extensive sense, comprehends all holy affections; confidence, submission, joy, faith, humility and abasement for sin. So that the essence of worship consists in holy, religious affections.——Where the soul flows out in supreme love to God, gives up the throne to him, and lies low, there is worship: And let there be ever so much parade and external show, without holy, rational affection, there is no worship that God approves.

II. I proceed to point out the external acts and exercises of worship.

The modes and forms of worship have been different in different ages of the church and dispensations of the covenant. Under the Jewish dispensation, they were exceedingly complex. The forms of worship among the Jews were attended with various rites, designed, for the most part, to assist and strengthen their faith in the atone-

ment. There were, accordingly, in their ritual, various bloody rights and sacrifices. But the worship under the Christian dispensation, being divested of those shadows which attended the preceding dispensations, is very simple. Such, indeed, is the simplicity, that there has been a great propensity in converts from among the Jews and Heathens, to add rites to the Christian worship. The church of Rome and the church of England have greatly deviated from the simplicity of Christian worship; which conduct is a high reflection on the wisdom of the Divine author. Had the design of the rites and exercises of worship been merely to excite the passions; the exhibition of Christ on the cross, and many such things, introduced into the Romish church, might have been highly proper. But the original institution of Christian worship shows, that it was the design of the author to call forth devotion by the exhibition of truth. This appears by his sermons which are left on record.

1. One exercise of Christian worship is prayer, social and private. This is clearly a part of Christian worship, and well adapted to answer the end of expressing humility, a sense of dependence, faith in Christ, and love to God. No one, I think, can call in question the propriety of this duty.—Our Saviour himself gave many directions how to perform it, and left an example, or directory.—We have Christ's example of secret prayer, and the Apostle's, of social prayer.—Indeed, we have many commands to be constant in prayer, "to pray without ceasing, and to pray always with all prayer."

2. Another duty, which, under certain circumstances is to be performed, in connection with prayer and other acts of worship, is fasting. Our Saviour, in treating on this subject, points out the

manner of performing the duty. What he says in the sixth chapter of Matthew, respects private devotion; but, at the same time, plainly supposes that the duty itself, was connected with Christian worship. Accordingly it was to be performed not only in a private but public manner. This appears from scriptural example, as when ministers, or deacons were ordained.——Our Saviour says respecting his disciples, that when he should be taken away, they should fast.

Some have questioned whether fasting belongs to the Christian dispensation; especially public, social fasting. But the least attention to the scriptures will make it evident. This is a duty frequently introduced. The gospel, it is true, does not, as under the Jewish dispensation, fix a particular period for the duty, unless, for instance, at every ordination of an Elder, or some cases of this nature. Fixing on a particular time, is left to circumstances and trials. It appears plainly from scripture, that when we are under private darkness or trials we are to fast in as private a manner as the nature of the case will admit.—So, in times of public darkness or calamity, we are to fast in a social manner.

3. As a mean of assisting in worship, God has instituted the reading and administration of the word. As under the law, so under the gospel it seems to be enjoined, that the scriptures should be read on the Sabbath. Thus the Apostle seems to urge the reading on the Sabbath of his epistle to the churches, from the example under the law. See Acts xv. 21. "Moses hath in every city, them that preach him, being read, &c." From which we learn that the practice under the law, of reading the scriptures, is still binding under the gospel. The preaching of the word is also to attend Christian worship. Thus we find an order of men in

the church, consecrated for this purpose, and solemnly charged to preach the gospel, &c. and to be constant in it. We have the examples of Christ and his Apostles for this purpose. Christ preached on various occasions.——Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and frequently on other occasions. So also the Apostle preached at Troas and elsewhere. It appears abundantly from scripture, that the stated administration of the word is a clear duty, instituted to assist the worship of the church.

4. Singing of psalms and hymns is another part of Christian worship, and one which is peculiarly adapted to enliven devotion. It is a commanded duty "to admonish in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs." We see Christ and his disciples employed in this kind of exercise, after the sacramental supper. Paul and Silas sang in prison, and there was a very special testimony of Divine approbation.

5. Covenanting and attending sealing ordinances seem to be other exercises of Christian worship. The solemn dedication of ourselves to God, in covenant transaction, (which is what is called confessing Christ before men) is an indispensible duty, which is to be performed in the assemblies of God's people; so also Baptism, as a seal of our own covenant engagements, is a very solemn act of worship. The dedication of children in baptism, is, on the part of the parent, a solemn act of worship to the Trinity, in which the soul expresses trust and reliance on God's mercy.

The sacramental supper is also a most solemn act of worship, in which the soul, in a proper approach, expresses supreme love and homage to God, and strong desires after him.

The imaginations of men have suggested other rites and exercises besides those prescribed in the

word of God: But they have never failed to mar the beauty of Christian worship. I have enumerated what I consider the leading acts and exercises in Christian worship, as prescribed in God's word, and I cannot but view them as admirably and completely adapted to promote the Christian life and practice.

III. I am to consider when more especially we are to devote time to the exercises of religion and worship. From what has been said of spiritual worship, we may see in the more secret, internal exercises of the soul its constant employ. We are to to pray without ceasing, that is, we are always to have the soul reaching after God, in the exercise of penitent, humble trust; not only so, but we are to be engaged in solemn worship, in the exercises of every day.—As to exact seasons, these are left, in some measure, to the state of our souls our trials and wants.—So as to seasons to be devoted to fasting, or thanksgiving, God has left these to the will and circumstances of his creatures; that is, he has not pointed out the particular times. I do not mean that there is no obligation to these duties; but that they are left to be performed as we may see occasion.——The first day of the week is the only day which is solemnly consecrated for the purpose of worship. At the same time, it is doubtless, a duty of the church to agree on frequent meetings in the week, for prayer and religious conference. How often these should be, is left as a matter of discretion. But we are not to exercise such a discretion with respect to *the day* which God has peculiarly set apart to be improved in worship.——We might suppose that the day on which Christ rose from the dead, and finished the work of redemption, would be peculiarly honored by special exercises.

1. God approves of the observance of this day for religious worship, as it has been remarkably owned by special mercies. On this day, the feast of first fruits was observed under the law. On this day, Christ appeared to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and caused them to experience his blessing. On this day, he appeared to the eleven, and spoke peace to them. On this day, the spirit was remarkably poured out at the feast of Pentecost; the most remarkable day of which we have any account; in which, extraordinary gifts were conferred on the disciples, and thousands were converted to the Christian faith. On this day, also, John experienced in the Isle of Patmos, that remarkable vision which is recorded in the Revelations.

2. This is the day on which the church has been wont to meet for worship. The disciples met together on the first day of the week, when they heard that Jesus had risen, and received the first visit from him after his resurrection. Their meeting together at this time, was not merely occasional, but it was on the day, in which the church statedly met to celebrate the Lord's supper, which was a most solemn act of worship. Thus, it is said, that "when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached &c."—This was the day on which, according to his directions, his epistle was to be read and a collection to be made for the poor saints at Jerusalem; which supposes that the church was then to meet. Besides, the Sabbath being the time when we hope for mercy, is the proper time to exercise liberality.

3. The Apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, considers, that as Christ rested from *his* labors, as God did from his, there remaineth a *Sabbath*, or *rest* to the people of God. So that every first

day of the week is to be wholly devoted to worship, in private, in the family, or in a public social manner.

I come now to the

IV. Thing proposed, which was, to consider the end of the institution of external acts and exercises of worship. Our text seems to consider that bodily exercise is not what God, as a spirit, regards. God looks at the heart. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit. The end of the commandment is charity or love. God regards the worshippers, whose souls flow out in supreme love to him in faith and humility; and where these exercises are not found, the worship is imperfect; for it is only pure love and affection in which God delights. I do not mean that God does not require the external act, (which, indeed, is always the necessary *fruit* of spiritual worship) but that he is pleased with bodily exercise, the tone of the voice &c. *only*, as having reference to certain ends——External worship is designed to advance the declarative glory of God. God is honored, only as our love is displayed in external manifestations and fruits. External worship is necessary therefore, that we may honor God in the view of creatures. God has, in this respect taken great pains to call forth love into fruit and and external act; as we may see in Noah, Abraham, Job, the prophets and martyrs, and in those institutions of worship, which the church now enjoys. Worship is peculiarly adapted, as to external exercise, to benefit our souls, to quicken and invigorate our affections. When I attend to the various parts of worship, and consider their influence, the whole appears a *complete* system; every way adapted to promote the Christian's advancement in the Divine life. There is, I trust, no Christian who does not find this to be true: There

is no Christian who does not, every time that he attends the administration of the word and ordinances, feel some benefit, some little reproof or quickening.——Those who neglect religious institutions, are not, I fear, duly sensible of how great benefit they deprive themselves; which leads me to to consider

V. The great importance of steady attention to the worship of God, in the spiritual exercises of it.

We see that where it is not the fruit of holy affection, it is not what God regards: Yet where the life is not inconsistent, it may be of benefit to teach our families, and all dependent on us, the necessity of being conformed to God.——Especially, is it every way of great importance where it is performed aright.

1. It is compliance with the will and command of God. It is a great thing to submit to God.

2. It is an important mean of quickening and invigorating the Christian. He feels as though he could, in no other way, *live* in a spiritual sense. The neglect of secret worship is one great reason of deadness. Indeed, we have no reason to expect strength in any other way than that of faithfulness in this duty.

3. Therefore, it is for our spiritual comfort and peace, as it will enable us to live free from guilt and horror, and enjoy God. It is the way, and the only way in which God imparts spiritual comfort. Where worship is suitably attended, such seasons are often, to Christians, of great comfort and refreshment. The neglect of thorough attention is, in them, the reason of doubts and fears of death, and the reason of their being often terrified as they are.——There is, my brethren, unspeakable comfort in the hearty and sincere worship of God. You may say that you do attend to the worship of God, but perhaps it is in a *listless*

manner; though you may attend pretty steadily in public, are not your closets witnesses against you?

4. It is important as a mean of eternal happiness. This is an instituted mean of salvation.—This is the way in which the Christian journeys towards heaven, and it is *only in this way* that he can arrive there at last.—If we attend to the lives of eminent Christians, we shall find that their growth and advancement have been proportioned to their exercises in the Christian worship.

5. It is important, as it redounds greatly to the declarative glory of God. This is the way in which we may honor God. God is greatly dishonored by neglects of worship. It is greatly to God's dishonor, that this house of his worship should be so thin on the Sabbath; especially in such a town as this. It is especially a dishonor to God, that professors should be so backward in attending meeting.——You may be complaining of your doubts and your worldly mindedness—and it is no wonder.

The sincere worship of God would have a happy influence on families. This is the way to teach them that there *is* a God. This will tend to awaken their attention to religion.——It is a dreadful thing to bring up a family without the worship of God!—It will also have a happy influence on our neighbors, and teach them that there is something in religion.

Improvement.

1. We see the great advantage which we enjoy under the Christian dispensation, from the simplicity of its worship. The yoke that was laid on the church under the law, was necessary for that dark dispensation; but we are in a state in which we do not need such a complex system of worship as that of the Jews.

2. We see that it is important, that we should neither add any thing to the instituted system of gospel worship, nor diminish any thing from it.—Some introduce many rites with relation to baptism and the Lord's supper. But this is a gross pollution of worship; a species of idolatory, and a violation of the second commandment.

3. We see in what a criminal light those are to be viewed who neglect the worship of God.—This worship is calculated and intended for your own benefit. In this neglect therefore, you sin against your own mercies, and are bringing down evils on yourselves.

This subject may administer reproof to many of you, my hearers. It is to be feared, that you are guilty of neglect as to your families; and it is to be presumed that you are, as to your closets, and as to seasons of social worship. You are, it is to be feared, training up your families for ruin. Let me urge the considerations that have been mentioned, to enforce a more careful attention to these things for the future.

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